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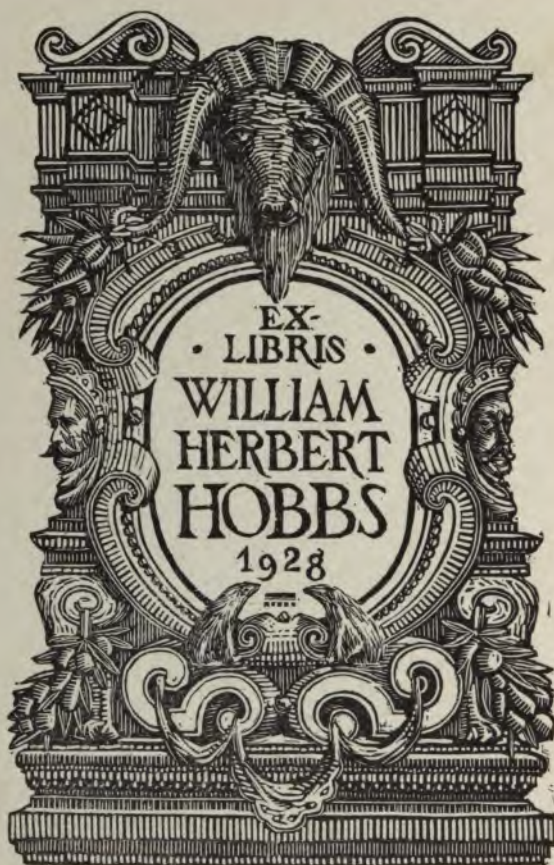
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# ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST



CHARLES WENDELL  
TOWNSEND·M.D



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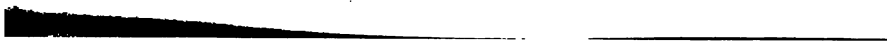
W. Hilton, Pinxt.

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Captain Cartwright Visiting His Fox-traps

*Frontispiece*







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

# ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST



BY  
CHARLES WENDELL TOWNSEND, M. D.  
*Author of "The Birds of Essex County"*

With Illustrations from Photographs  
and a Map



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## Captain Cartwright

"Explanation of Frontispiece.

"**T**HE FRONTISPIECE represents a Winter Scene on the seacoast of LABRADOR, with the *Author* taking his usual walk round his fox-traps. He is supposed to have got sight of some deer, and has put his dog's hood on, to keep him quiet. His hat (which is white,) northwester, wrappers, cuffs, breeches, and buskins, are English; his jacket (which is made of Indian-dressed deerskin, and painted,) sash, and rackets are Mountaineer; and his shoes Esquimau. The pinovers of his northwester are loose, and hang down on the right side of it. On his back is a trap, fixed by a pair of slings, in the manner of a soldier's knapsack. A bandoleer hangs across his breast, from his right shoulder; to which are fastened a black fox and his hatchet. A German rifle is on his



## CAPTAIN CARTWRIGHT

left shoulder. In the background is a yellow fox in a trap; beyond him, there is a white bear crossing the ice of a narrow harbour; and at the mouth of the harbour the view is terminated by a peep at the sea, which is frozen over. The tops of a few small rocks appear, and the rocky summits of the distant hills are bare, but all the rest of the ground is covered with snow."

— "*A Journal of Transactions and events during a Residence of nearly sixteen years on the COAST OF LABRADOR.*" By George Cartwright, Esq., Newark, 1792.

## Preface

---

LABRADOR is an interesting country. It is near at hand and easily accessible, yet it is but little known. Two mail-steamers, which carry passengers, sail to Labrador from Newfoundland, and Newfoundland is quickly and easily reached from Sydney, Cape Breton. One steamer, the *Home*, sails once a week from the Bay of Islands on the west coast of Newfoundland, skirts this mountainous shore, crosses the Straits of Belle Isle, and, after touching at a dozen places on the southern coast of Labrador, reaches Battle Harbour. Here it turns about for the return journey.

The other mail-steamer, the *Virginia Lake*, leaves St. Johns at the end of the railroad on the east coast of Newfoundland once in two weeks, follows this picturesque coast, and crosses the Straits directly to Battle Harbour.

## PREFACE

From here it proceeds to Nain, or as far north as the ice will permit.

As we wished to see as much of the Labrador coast as possible, in our brief summer vacation, my companion and I combined the trips. We went by the *Home* to and from Battle Harbour, and from the latter place to Nain and back by the *Virginia Lake*.

Although the birds were the chief objects of my study, I found many points of interest in Labrador. Nowhere can one find so near home icebergs and the floe. These alone made the trip well worth while. The scenery, the geology, the flowers and trees, the fish and fishermen, the Eskimos and Eskimo dogs, the Hudson's Bay Company's posts, the Moravians and Doctor Grenfell's Mission are all of unusual interest.

When the Eastern States are smothering in July and August heat, the cool air of Labrador has its attractions. Certainly one can obtain a more complete change in a brief visit to Labrador than in any other way.

Nearly all the photographs reproduced here

## PREFACE

were taken by Dr. Glover M. Allen and myself. Several were taken the previous summer by Dr. W. P. Bolles and Dr. E. A. Crockett. To all of these, particularly to Doctor Allen, the companion of my travels, I wish to express my thanks.

Boston, *September, 1906.*





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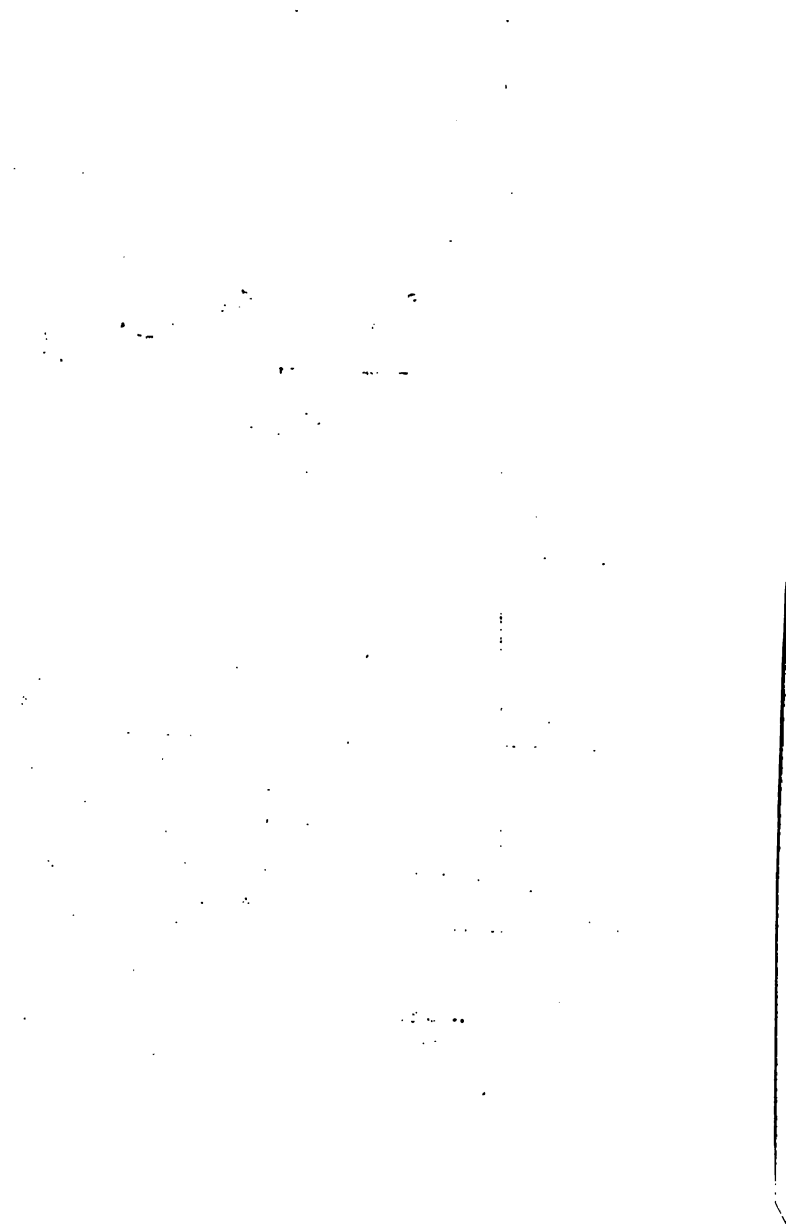
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# Along the Labrador Coast

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

"If the soil were as good as the harboroughs are, it were a great Commoditie; but it is not to be called the new Land but rather stones and wilde craggés, and a place fit for wilde beasts, for in all the North Land, I did not see a cart-load of good earth. . . . To be sure, I beleeeve that this was the land that God allotted to Caine."

—*Jacques Cartier, 1534, "First Voyage," Hakluyt's version.*

THE approach to Labrador is interesting. In order to save time we had come by rail to North Sydney, hurrying by the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes of Cape Breton. From North Sydney it is a night's journey by the "large and elegant" steamer *Bruce* to Port aux Basques at the southwest corner of Newfoundland, and if one wishes to speak like a native, one should say Newfoundlánd, with

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

the accent on the last syllable. Here the train on the narrow gauge railroad, which runs its devious course along the west shore, and then across the island to St. Johns, is boarded. I use the nautical phrase "boarded" advisedly, for soon after starting, one realizes that the way is tempestuous and that the cars pitch and groan and creak like a ship at sea. One must take care of one's steps, and eating is a difficult, not to say dangerous, process. Later, while walking up the track by the Humber River, I found the flag-covered train of the visiting governor-general of Canada at a standstill. I asked the conductor, who was outside, whether the train had broken down. "Oh, no," he said, "his lordship is eating his breakfast."

The train does not go very fast, and one has a good chance to view the country, which is for the most part desolate half-burnt forests, with here and there a lake or an open caribou barren. We passed a range of mountains with snow-filled valleys, and this was on the glorious Fourth of July. Progress up an incline was still more slow, owing to the wet and slippery

## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

rails. Every now and then, the engine would stop, back a little for a fresh start, and then creep painfully ahead, puffing violently. The brakemen ran alongside, shovelling gravel on to the track, while the conductor hit wildly at loose bolts on the engine with a long hammer. Here I was able to do a little botanizing without losing the train. Shadbushes and marsh-marigolds, early spring flowers with us, were still in blossom. We arrived at our destination at Bay of Islands at seven in the evening, having travelled 143 miles in eight hours.

The mail-steamship *Home*, on which we were to embark for Labrador, although due to sail that afternoon, had not returned from her last trip, so we put up at the "British North American Hotel," kept by Antonia Joseph and son, across the track from the railroad station. The "Hotel," not as palatial as its name might imply, and its proprietor reminded me of certain portions of my native city. However, we were well content, and passed three very comfortable days there, feasting on fried onions and on the salmon which Antonia

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

caught every morning in his nets near the mouth of the Humber River.

As trains go only every second day, we were not disturbed from this source, although the tracks ran almost under the "baranda" — as our host called it — outside of our window. In fact, when a train did go by, one felt inclined to wave and cheer, the excitement was so great.

At this railroad station were great piles of soft coal, about which wandered sheep that reminded us of the little poem:

"Mary had a little lamb,  
Its fleece was white as snow;  
It followed her to Pittsburg  
And now look at the d——n thing."

The sheep frequented the tracks and were to be seen lying with their heads on the rail as if prepared for the slaughter. The danger, however, was not great.

The post-office here is not a rushing place. After some search the pretty postmistress produced a well thumbed post-card and two two-cent stamps. As we wished more, she said that she had sold some stamps the pre-



## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

vious week to one of the neighbours, and she thought she might be able to get them back for us, as she knew they had not been used yet.

The scenery along the Humber is very fine, and the woods were filled with interesting birds in full song, so that we enjoyed our stay exceedingly. Fox sparrows were singing everywhere their wonderful flute-like song. The Lincoln's sparrow takes the place of his near relative, the song sparrow, here, but unlike that bird he is very shy, especially while singing. White-throated sparrows, pine linnets, pine grosbeaks, and crossbills were all abundant. The ruby-crowned kinglet, winter wren, and water-thrush were in full song, and I became intimately acquainted with the mourning warbler. Perhaps I should qualify the last statement by limiting my acquaintance to the male, for it was only with the greatest difficulty that I managed to get a glimpse of the shy female.

After considerable delay, — and delays are the rule and not the exception in this part of the world, — we were off on the good steamship *Home*, on July 7th, and at once felt at

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

home in the company of her jovial commander. It is a great comfort to know that the captain of the steamer in which one is travelling is careful, conscientious, and skilful, and in these qualities Captain Taylor is indeed preëminent, but he does love dearly his little joke, as I soon found out, and he was unmerciful in his attentions to two students from Philadelphia, who were going salmon fishing. The gaiety of the voyage was further augmented by an amateur geologist from Washington, who frequently referred to the exposed strata in view with the sage remark, "Potsdam, I believe," and the New Jersey physician, whose constant pleasure was to suggest seasickness — although the sea was calm — to one of the students, until his suggestion was effective, when the worthy doctor was filled with regret.

The Bay of Islands is a wonderfully beautiful bay, extending in three great arms many miles into the land. Its shores are high and in places mountainous. Mount Blomidon rises sheer from the water to a height of 2,135 feet, its black and scarred precipices towering up in

## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

rugged beauty. Brooks foam down its sides and break into waterfalls over the precipices, floating off in the wind in a cloud of spray. Lark Harbour is a lovely offshoot from the bay between guardian mountains. The shores abound in ovens or caves, with little pebbly beaches in between. One could linger all summer along this beautiful Newfoundland coast, but as Kipling says, "That is another story," for my tale is about Labrador. I will merely say, however, that for two days and a half we coasted the Newfoundland shore, stopping at Bonne Bay, where the scenery is glorious, — the mountains one to two thousand feet in height, — and at Hawkes's Bay, a beautiful lake-like bay, where we first met the smells and sights of a whale factory. I put the smells first advisedly. Here we had an afternoon and evening ashore, and learned much about the birds, and visited a salmon stream as well, where salmon of large size were rushing up the turbulent current, jumping at times clear from the water. Most of the ship's company, including the purser and the postman, valiantly



## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

fished the stream and fought the flies, returning triumphantly with one salmon and one large trout. We turned in that night while the ship was still fast to the whale factory wharf, unloading coal, but notwithstanding the noise of the winches and the smell of departed whales, that was thick enough to be cut with a knife, we slept the sleep of the just.

At Flower's Cove, the last stop on the Newfoundland side, we went ashore in the mail-boat, and got a taste of the arctic conditions that we should see on the Labrador side. Barren rocks and moors, reindeer and sphagnum moss, dwarf spruces, firs and willows, bake-apple flowers and mountain azaleas, men in skin boots, sealskins stretched on frames, howling and fighting Eskimo dogs, made us eager for what was to come.

Just as we were finishing supper, the mate put in his head and said, "There is a bull-bird, sir, swimming close to the ship." I rushed out, and sure enough a dovekie or little auk was swimming in such a bewildered way so close to the vessel that the mate was able to



**Bonne Bay, Newfoundland**

Photograph by Dr. E. A. Crockett



**West St. Modeste**



## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

catch it in a bucket. The bird had lost one foot, and it was perhaps owing to this crippled condition that it stayed so far south in summer. It was probably the only bird of its kind on the coast that summer, and it showed great discrimination in choosing to swim to the *Home*. It was in interesting summer plumage with black upper breast.

The next morning, July 10th, we caught a glimpse of the Labrador shore, through the fog, as we steamed across the Straits of Belle Isle, here about fifteen or twenty miles wide. As our object had been incidentally to see and learn all we could of everything, but chiefly and above all things to take note of the bird life, our place was always on deck in fair weather and foul, and ashore whenever we could get a chance. As we returned by the same route, we were able to fill out our knowledge of the parts of the coast invisible by fog or night on the way north, and for the sake of simplicity I have described it all in continuity.

From time to time we had seen numbers of puffins, or paroquets, as they are invariably

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called here, flying about or swimming on the water, but were quite surprised at the numbers we saw at and near Paroquet Island off Bradore, the westernmost point touched at along the southern Labrador coast. This is a small island of crumbling red sandstone, with a slightly elevated centre. Here the puffins were flying about, as thick as flies around a sugar-bowl. Many were sitting on the rocks in groups of half a dozen or more, others dotted the surface of the water all about, but the majority were either busily flying away from the island after provender for their young, or were returning with caplin, small silvery fish, hanging from their bills. The birds burrow in the soft rock of the island and a single egg is laid in the burrow.

The puffin is a good bird to watch from a steamer, for he allows of close approach before he attempts to get out of the way. After nervously dabbing with his bill at the water a few times, he either dives or flies away. In both cases he may be said to *fly* away, for in diving he flops out his wings and continues to



## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

use them under the water in flight. I watched one near at hand come out of the water flying, only to plump down into the water again and continue his flight below the surface.

Whether swimming on the surface or in aerial flight the shape and appearance of the puffin are characteristic. They are short and apoplectic in form, being devoid of a neck. Their large red bills and gray eye-rings, which suggest spectacles, and the dark band about the neck give them a comical appearance. We met with them all along the Labrador coast, but nowhere so plentifully as here.

The line between Canadian and Newfoundland Labrador, although still a vexed question, is to the east of Bradore, between it and Blanc Sablon. All the rest of the trip was in Newfoundland Labrador. Bradore Bay is surrounded by small but interesting mountains, three of which are conical in shape and tower above the rest, one of them reaching the height of 1,264 feet. They were the last we saw of "The Labrador" when we steamed south, and

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

we regretfully watched them disappear from sight.

In this Bradore Bay, the hardy Breton fishermen and traders founded the town of Brest about the year 1520. Traces of this town, which is said to have had one thousand inhabitants, are still to be found.

Near Blanc Sablon, as its name would imply, are white sands in the form of dunes and beaches. Recent changes of level are shown by the raised beaches. The fish companies' houses here are neat and substantial, painted a clean white, but we obtained all too scanty glimpses of this place through the fog and rain. However, it is here that we saw our first iceberg, albeit a small stranded one. Terraced hillsides, with patches of snow and cloud-capped, formed the background, while men in oilskins rowing in dories, one facing the bow, the other the stern, were all about us in the foreground. Others were rowing in long fishing-boats with great sweeps. A sealing steamer, the *Nimrod*, lay at anchor. The air was chilly and cold, 53° at noon on that the tenth of July.

## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

At Forteau there is a large open bay with dark red sandstone cliffs of horizontal strata which give the appearance of terraces. All these stratified rocks on the southern coast were laid down during the Cambrian epoch. We went ashore in the mail-boat and climbed the steep wet hillside amid the Labrador tea and Alpine azalea, the dwarf balsam fir and black spruces. An Alice's thrush sang on our right, several white-crowned and savanna sparrows on our left.

As we steamed eastward, we saw a few razor-billed auks, or tinkers as they are called, and murre. We had seen these birds from time to time the last day or two. The razor-billed auk is larger than the puffin, but it has, like the latter bird, a short neck, while the murre, of which there are both the common and the Brünnich's here, shows a longer neck both in flight and on the water. The auk sits nearly bolt upright on the rocks, and on the water has a habit of cocking up its tail, which the murre declines to do. At this season the bill of the auk is broad and sharp, which at



## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

once distinguishes it from the murre, with its narrower bill. As the auk flies away, it shows a characteristic pattern on the back, the white of the sides rolling up, so that there is only a black line in the middle. In the case of the puffin, the whole back looks black from the same point of view. All the members of this group, the auks, murres, puffins, and black guillemots, sway frequently from side to side in flight above water, while all use their wings in flight below water. We were kept busy noting all these points from the deck as we steamed along. Our prismatic binoculars were in constant use, and I occasionally had recourse to a telescope for birds at a distance where the diagnosis was in doubt.

L'Anse au Loup lies at the head of a shallow bay in the middle of an amphitheatre of hills. The settlement of neat white houses is built on a beach of red sand, over which extend about a dozen long narrow wharves erected on piles. On either side rose red sandstone terraced cliffs whose horizontal strata were interrupted in places by white lines of limestone.

## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

There was a steep talus slope at the foot, here dark red and naked, there clothed with vegetation of a lovely fresh green colour. There were patches of snow here and there, and rushing brooks and cascades falling from the cliffs. The cliffs to the eastward, which resemble the Palisades of the Hudson, are called "The Battery" by the sailors. They rise sheer to a height of 350 feet, while the mountains behind, which were dimly to be seen in the mist, reach a height of 1,100 feet. There were great caves in places, and in others outstanding turrets. The fishing-boats in the sea at the foot of the cliff looked tiny in comparison. These cliffs extend to the eastward as far as L'Anse au Diable. The latter word is softened here, and bereft of its terrors by being pronounced "jobble."

At Point Amour, which, curiously enough, is contiguous to L'Anse au Diable, the Straits of Belle Isle are only eight miles wide. This is the narrowest point. Beyond this we dropped anchor, while the mail-boat went ashore at West St. Modeste. Here I noticed that trawls

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

or, as they are called here, "bultows" were used for fish, and men were busy hauling and baiting them.

As we steamed along, a great iceberg appeared out of the mist, rising in three peaks, green and white, from the cold blue-gray water, against a background of fog that was tinged a pale salmon colour by the sunset. The iceberg changed constantly in colour and outline as we went by. It was a wonderfully beautiful and impressive sight.

The steamer now turned into the land, and it looked as if we were going to run ashore on the rocks. However, a narrow passage, or "tickle," suddenly opened out, and through this we passed into the picturesque, landlocked harbour of Red Bay, surrounded by tumbled hills. Here was suddenly revealed to us a little village of a dozen houses, all painted white, and a church with a red pointed steeple. Farther in the bay were some more houses. A green schooner with rich dark brown sails was coming to anchor, and a small fishing-boat with pink sails was scudding about. I went



## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

ashore on a low rocky island, and was taken off to prescribe for a disconsolate dyspeptic fisherman.

Of Chateau, at which we stopped at two the next morning, I saw nothing, but on the return trip I got a glimpse from Henley Harbour of the lovely valley in which this lies, surrounded by blue-peaked mountains. Henley Harbour is notable for the great flat-topped mass of black basalt called the Devil's Dining-table, which towers above it to a height of 225 feet, resting on a base of syenite. The lower half of this mass of basalt is formed into perfect hexagonal columns, about twenty-five feet high. Some of these columns stand out almost by themselves. They are of the same formation as the Giant's Causeway in Ireland. There is a sharp line of demarkation between the lower columnar basalt and the upper part, which shows no columns. This must have been a later flow of basalt, solidifying under different conditions. As far as I could discover in a hasty survey, the top seemed inaccessible, but there is said to be an easy stair-like ascent over the columns at the

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

eastern side. The width of the Table is about 350 feet.

While I explored a raised beach of sea pebbles below the northern end of the Table, a great white and mottled falcon which could be no other than a white or Iceland gyrfalcon, circled about the cliffs to the north. He soon alighted and disappeared into a deep cleft. Reappearing, he hopped and fluttered a few paces along the side. The summons to return to the ship roused me from the observation of this noble bird, and I had to be content with what I had seen.

Chateau and Henley Harbours have an interesting history. It was here that Jacques Cartier assembled his fleet in 1535. It was garrisoned by the British in 1763 in order to protect the fisheries, but it was captured in 1778 by the American privateer *Minerva*. Three vessels and property to the value of seventy thousand pounds sterling were carried away. Again in 1796 the place was bombarded by a French fleet. The British, when all their ammunition was exhausted, retreated into the

## THE SOUTHERN COAST OF LABRADOR

back country, leaving a burning village behind them.

Between Henley Harbour and Battle Harbour, at the entrance of the Straits, the steamer passed by flat-topped red sandstone hills lying on a more ancient base. Off to the east were the cliffs of Belle Island with their long level skyline.

We reached Battle Harbour on the morning of July 11th, and dropped anchor off the southern entrance.

## CHAPTER II

### BATTLE HARBOUR

"Early this morning I went to great Caribou, and walked all over that Island."

— *Cartwright's Journal, Jan. 17, 1771.*

AS we landed from the *Home* at Battle Harbour, we met some friends from "the States" who were departing on the same steamer. They had been waiting three days and they said: "You will soon be tired of this place. You can see everything in half an hour." On my remarking that the birds would keep us occupied, they replied that there were "about three sparrows" on the island.

We spent three days there, waiting for the *Virginia Lake* to take us north, and a longer time on our return, yet not a moment did we grudge, so full of interest is the place.

The Eskimos in former days dwelt in these favoured regions and even farther south. Be-

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tween them and the Indians was a constant feud, and here it is, tradition says, that a final and decisive battle took place. The Indians, who were the first to come in contact with the whites, and had obtained from them gunpowder and firearms, were victorious, and the Eskimos retreated northward.

Battle Harbour is formed by the slight expansion of a narrow passage or "tickle," as these passages are called, between Battle Island on the east and Great Caribou Island on the west. The waters of the harbour were on our arrival, as they are at all times during the summer, a scene of great activity. Fishing-schooners are anchored all about, in close proximity to each other and to the dangerous looking rocks. Men crowd their decks cleaning fish or mending nets. A larger vessel, a three-masted schooner with square upper sails on the foremast, is moored alongside of the wharf, discharging a cargo of salt from Cadiz, to receive in return one of salted fish, the finished product of the place. Smaller boats, great fishing-boats, with sweeps eighteen feet long,



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dart about in all directions. One man stands erect on a thwart near the stern, and sculls with a huge oar. Other boats are under sail, the sails picturesquely stained with bark to a yellow or brown tint.

Partly blocking the mouth of the harbour on the south is a rocky promontory, on which a structure like an immense grape trellis is erected. Its use is evident from the mass of nets used for a fish-trap, which is here spread to dry. The nets like the sails are "barked" a terra-cotta red. Farther to the south is Double Island with its lighthouse, the only one on the eastern coast of Labrador, with the exception of the one at Indian Tickle. Some twelve miles south of Double Island, the shadowy outlines of the lofty cliffs of Belle Isle can be discerned.

On the north of the harbour several islands narrow the tickle, and a glorious iceberg, glittering in the sun, and wonderful in the greens and blues of its shadows, adds to the interest of the view. This berg is stranded in the deep water near the mouth of the harbour,



Battle Harbour. Northern End



Battle Harbour. Frame for Drying Nets



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and I can count seven others in sight. Beyond stretches the lovely St. Lewis Sound, with its mountainous shores and rocky islands. The mountains are small, but are beautiful in the morning light and changing cloud shadows, and there is a charm in their desolation and wildness, unbroken by the faintest sign of man's occupancy.

But to return to the harbour. To the west rise the rocky walls of Great Caribou Island almost precipitously to a height of one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet. Clinging to their steep slopes close to the water are ten or a dozen fishermen's tilts, little boxes of houses, weather-stained and lichen-covered, matching perfectly the rocks, while extending over the water itself is an equal number of fish stages. These rude structures at once suggest the dwellings of the ancient Lake Dwellers of Switzerland. They are erected on small piles over the water, their sides thatched with fir boughs, and their roofs with green sods, amidst which grow alpine flowers of rare beauty and interest.

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On the easterly or Battle Island side there is a small plateau between the high rocky island and the water. This bit of ground is eked out by an extensive wharf, on which the substantial buildings of the fish company are situated. Behind these is a fish flake or platform for drying fish, of perhaps an acre in extent, and at times no hay-field scene can be busier. Immediately behind this and under the great rocky hill of the island are the two hospital buildings of Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, with the motto in large letters across the front: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." On either side, and extending along the shore, is the little village of some two dozen houses, with a small church and schoolhouse. Wigwam-shaped wood-piles are dotted here and there. The sticks of wood fifteen or twenty feet long are arranged in this manner so that they shall project above the winter's snows. A few sealskins are drying on frames or on the roofs of the houses. On the top of the rock is an observation platform and flagstaff, as well





Tilts and Fish-stages, Battle Harbour



Skins of Harp Seals on a Fish-house at Battle Harbour



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as the house and staff of a Marconi wireless telegraph station.

All of these varied scenes and objects can be viewed from the top of the rock, and one never grows weary of studying them. There is always something new. The colours of the rocks, with their patches of struggling vegetation, the surf along the shores, the colour of the sea itself, of the sky, of the distant mountains, and of the wonderful icebergs, the drifting fogs, and the ever-changing mirage can only be described by the brush of a great artist. To lie in the lee of a rock on an elastic bed of reindeer moss and curlew berry in the sun and pure cool air, and drink in all the changing beauty of the scene, is an experience worth treasuring.

The rocks of Battle Harbour, and by this I mean Battle Island and the Great Caribou Island, are archaic, granites and gneiss, gray and pink, with numerous black trap dikes running generally north and south, a few east and west. White quartz veins, big and little, run in every direction, crumpled in places by the



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internal forces so that they form tortuous ribbons on the rock surface. There is evidence here of a greater battle than was ever fought by puny human hands. The signs of old Mother Nature's pristine Titanic force are everywhere apparent. In direct contrast to this fiery fury, the marks of recent glaciation in the rounded forms, the *roches moutonnées*, the striae running northwest and southeast, are also apparent.

At first sight one would say that no trees are to be found on these islands, but a closer inspection shows there are several kinds. All lie flat on the ground, flatter than our ground juniper, not daring to raise their heads even a few inches against the chilling blasts. This statement is true all along the exposed eastern shore and islands of Labrador, but in the sheltered nooks and crannies the same trees may be found reaching a height of several inches or even feet. The conditions here are the same as on the summit of Mt. Washington, and many of the plants are the same. It is a paradise for the botanist, and I almost

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forgot the birds in my desire to belong to this class. Two kinds of willows, one with pale olive-coloured leaves, the other with dark, shining green ones, creep along the ground. Birches with little round leaves, and larches, spruces, and balsam firs, all join this humble rank of creeping vegetation. Some of these trees are evidently of great age. A little larch that had successfully risen to the great height of nine inches in a gully, I found on sectioning and counting the rings with a pocket lens to be thirty-two years old. The massive trunk was three-eighths of an inch in diameter. A balsam fir with a spread of branches of twenty-seven inches, whose topmost twig was thirteen inches from the ground, showed fifty-four rings in a massive trunk two inches in diameter. Another balsam fir nine inches high and twenty-one inches in extent showed thirty-five rings in a trunk one inch and a quarter in diameter. A black spruce eleven inches tall and twenty-two in extent, with a trunk only one inch in diameter, had lived over half a century, showing fifty-two rings in its cross section. The

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sturdy little veteran wreaked his vengeance on me by making a great nick in the sheath-knife with which I laboured to dissect him and learn his secrets.

One can appreciate the humour of the jovial captain of the *Home* who took some young men aside and advised them to be careful not to carve their names on the trees of Battle Island, as there was a strict law against it!

The hard bare rocks are for the most part covered with lichens, black and gray, yellow and orange. Everywhere it can get a foothold is the fir-like creeping *empetrum*, the "black-berry" of the Labradorites, the well-known curlew berry or crowberry. With this is mingled a small amount of the gray reindeer lichen, much more abundant farther north, and various mosses. *Sphagnum* moss is everywhere, and is always as full of water as a sponge, whether it be on a steep hillside or in a deep glen. In places it may be seen advancing like a floating garden over a dark pool, of which there are many, large and small, in these islands,



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and woe to the incautious one who steps too heavily on this floating mass.

Among these lichens and mosses grows the Labrador tea, short and stunted here, but with its characteristic furry brown under surface of the leaves. Its bunches of white flowers are conspicuous and attractive to the flies. A dwarf beach pea is common, as well as a dwarf purple iris, alpine chickweed, marsh trefoil, mountain heath, and alpine azalea, while great bunches of fleshy leaved sedums or live-forever with their purple and yellow flowers reach a height inversely in proportion to the exposure of their positions. This latter plant seems particularly fond of growing on the roofs of the tilts and other sod-covered houses all along the coast. A pretty flower looking like a violet is common, with a rosette of yellowish leaves at the base, *Pinguicula vulgaris*, and a moss-like plant, beset with tiny pink flowers, the moss campion. The latter is also called the cushion pink, a very appropriate name. Another flower is common, the pale or swamp laurel, looking like a very

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small edition of our mountain laurel, while the white tufts of a cotton grass are everywhere noticeable.

In July the white flowers of the famous "bake-apple," *Rubus chamæmorus*, dear to the hearts and stomachs of the good people of Labrador, dot the turf, each flower having two or three leaves as companions. In August they ripen into reddish yellow berries as large as large raspberries, and are eagerly gathered and eaten raw, or made into sauces and preserves. A small blue berry is common, and is called "blue herts." This name is probably a contraction and corruption of blue whortleberry. Mountain cranberries are also common and are gathered for eating under the name of partridgeberry. The curlew berry, *Empetrum nigrum*, on which the curlew formerly fattened in countless numbers, is called blackberry and is also made into sauces. The fruit of the northern dwarf cornel or bunchberry is sometimes gathered and cooked. It is called "cracker."

The birds of course received my chief at-



The Devil's Dining Table, Henley Harbour





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tention. The resident species of Battle Island are soon enumerated, namely: several pairs of pipits, two or three pairs of savanna sparrows, a couple of pairs of white-crowned sparrows, and a pair of spotted sandpipers. A pair of robins is said to have made the island its home last year. Horned larks from Great Caribou Island, and wandering crossbills and redpoll linnets are seen here, and doubtless many migrants stop and rest.

On Great Caribou Island across the harbour the birds are more abundant, and the notes of a day spent there will give perhaps a fair idea of the birds to be found in this alpine or boreal region.

It was a beautiful day at the latter end of July when we were ferried in a fishing-boat across Battle Harbour, and climbed the rocks of Great Caribou Island. White-crowned sparrows, the familiar door-yard bird of the bleak Labrador coast, were the first to greet us, and one sang a welcome from the turf-covered roof of a fish-house. At White Bear Islands, farther north, we had heard one singing glo-

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riously from the cross stay at the head of the mainmast of a schooner anchored close to the shore. It is common to see them picking up crumbs and insects about the houses, and a friend told of seeing one hopping along the body of a sleeping Eskimo dog, picking at the flies that surrounded him.

The white-crowned sparrow is a strikingly handsome bird, and has well been called the aristocrat of his tribe, with his snow-white crown and white bars over the eyes. The area of the white crown is enlarged when he erects it in pride or passion, or when the wind blows it up. His call note is characteristic and easily recognized, a metallic *chink*. He also has a sharp chipping alarm note. His song is pleasing, although it has not the familiar charm of the song of his cousin, the Peabody bird, or the power and brilliancy of that of the fox-sparrow. Perhaps because I heard it so often in wet and stormy surroundings, the song rang in my head as *more, wet, wetter wet, chezee*. There is a long and somewhat mournful stress laid on the first note, and a buzz not

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easily expressed in words comes in near the end.

Near the top of the rock I sat down, evidently close to a nest of a pair of these birds, for the anxious parents hopped about but a few yards distant, constantly uttering the sharp alarm *chip*. One of the birds had a bill full of insects, but this did not interfere with the chipping. The plumage of the two sexes is alike, but I fancied I could distinguish the female by her slighter form, the less brilliant colouration and her more anxious demeanour.

American pipits or titlarks were everywhere, and equally solicitous about their young. Several of the latter with tails only partly grown were wagging them up and down as skilfully as their elders. Among the rocks and even on the ridgepoles of the tilts and fish-houses, the birds walked sedately, nodding their pretty heads in a dovelike way, and ever and anon wagging their tails. Their slim, graceful forms and quaker gray and brown plumage make them very attractive birds.

Their call-note, *see-kit*, so familiar on the



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Massachusetts coast in the autumn migrations, was occasionally heard, but the common note at this season and one constantly repeated by reason of their solicitude for their young was a loud whistling *tswit*, resembling at times very closely the alarm note of the spotted sandpiper.

The flight song of the pipit is well worth noting. A few were still indulging in this rhapsody early in July, but now family cares engrossed all their time. On July 11th, at Great Caribou Island, I was first introduced to the song of this bird. One standing on a rock in a valley far below me suddenly sprang up into the air, mounting nearly vertically but circling slightly. Up, up he went, singing repeatedly a simple refrain, *che-whée, che-whée*, with a vibratory resonance in the *whée*. The rocky cliff on whose brink I stood was about 150 feet high, but the joyous bird was borne still higher by the ardour of his song. Attaining an eminence of perhaps two hundred feet, perhaps more, above the ground, he checked himself and at once began the descent. Down he went,

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faster and faster, repeating his song at the same time faster and faster. Long before he reached the ground he set his wings and tipped from side to side to check his descent. After remaining quiet for a few moments he rose again. I timed him and found that he was twenty seconds in going up, emitting his refrain forty-eight times. In the descent he was quicker, accomplishing it in ten seconds and singing thirty-two times. One must needs be alert to take note of such a rapid and brilliant performance.

Another bird that always claimed our especial attention on the rocky coast of Labrador was to be found in scattered pairs all over the heights of Great Caribou Island. This was the horned lark, and well does he deserve his name, for in this, the breeding season, the points of black feathers projecting backward above the eyes of the males, like miniature horns, are plainly to be made out, so that with a glass one can distinguish the sexes at a glance. This bird, too, has a wonderful flight song, but of a different sort from that of the pipit,



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resembling in kind but not in quality the famous song of the English skylark. The bird suddenly mounts high into the air, going up silently in irregular circles, at times climbing nearly vertically to such a height that he appears but a little speck in the sky, — several hundred feet it seems to me. Arrived at this eminence he spreads his wings and soars, emitting meanwhile his song, such as it is, — one or two preliminary notes and then a series of squeaks and high notes with a bit of a fine trill. It has a jingly, metallic sound like distant sleigh-bells, although the squeaks remind one strongly of an old gate. The whole effect, however, is not unpleasant, — even melodious. The song finished, he flaps his wings a few times, closes them, and sails again, repeating his song. One bird I timed remained in the air three minutes, during which he repeated his song thirty-two times. Another sang twenty-four times and was in the heights one and a half minutes. All this time the bird is flying in irregular circles, or occasionally, if the wind be strong, simply heading up into it. The

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performance ended, he plunges headforemost down to the earth, reaching it in a marvellously short space of time. The descent is as silent as the ascent. Several times I found the birds lazily giving the same song, but with less energy and abandon, from a rock, and at other times I heard them singing above me out of sight in the fog.

Advancing over the first high plateau, we descended into a grand amphitheatre among the rocks, with black, perpendicular walls and deep fissures and caverns. This was a place we delighted to explore, and in the early part of July snow-banks still remained. Here the familiar and ubiquitous savanna sparrow sang his grasshopper-like song, and the restlessly roving redpoll linnet flew about overhead, stopping on a rock or dwarf tree just long enough to display his crimson crown and breast to our glasses, but never long enough for a good look. His *chug chug* as he flies recalls the white-winged crossbill's call-note, and his sweet *deé-ar* resembles closely the similar note of his cousin goldfinch. Frequently does

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he wax melodious in his own way, and fly about in irregular circles alternately *chug chugging* and emitting a finely drawn rattle or trill.

Farther on my companion and I had wandered some distance apart, but were suddenly drawn toward the same spot, each by the same object, — to discover the author of a song new to us. What was our surprise in finding the performer to be the familiar tree-sparrow, the "winter chippy" of New England. Both of us are familiar with the sweet but rather mournful song of this bird heard in the spring before his departure for the north, but neither could discover in this Labrador song any resemblance to the New England one, and we heard it many times not only at Great Caribou Island but elsewhere. It was fortunately one of those rare songs that one can express in words, that mean something to others besides the writer. It was a simple ditty, frequently repeated, sometimes five or six times a minute. It always sounded like *seet-seet — sit-iter — sweet-sweet*. It was delightful to be able to memorize a song so easily, and the birds were





Rocky Amphitheatre, Great Caribou Island



Wood-piles at Battle Harbour



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most obliging in sitting on fir-bushes, — I can hardly call them trees, — within a few feet of us during the performance. The black spot on the breast seemed especially large, and the crown of a particularly fine chestnut colour. Altogether it was a delightful experience.

After crossing an extensive sphagnum plain, with whose deceptive sponge-like character we were already familiar, a tempting little beach and the heat of the day,  $72^{\circ}$  at high noon, invited to a plunge in the clear waters. The temperature of the water I did not take with a thermometer, but it was consistent with an iceberg in the offing. My presence on the beach greatly disturbed a pair of ring-neck plovers, whose young were evidently concealed in the grass near at hand. They would alight near me, protesting in low, conversational tones. Then they would fly to near-by rocks, anon returning with great fury as if to strike me, but swerving off before this pitch of indignation was reached. On the ground the birds were constantly bobbing their heads, a nervous trick, a sort of habit chorea, common



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to many of the plover family. The yellow-legs and spotted sandpiper teeter nervously, as does also the water-thrush, while the palm-warbler and pipit wag their tails. It is, as it were, a case where a nervous habit has become fixed, as if among a race of men all should twitch their eyes or shrug their shoulders.

Whether these traits in the different species of birds are inherited or due to imitation of their elders, — to their environment, in other words, — might of course be debated. In some of them, at least, the trait appears so early that it seems fair to suspect that it is inherited. If the eggs of a spotted sandpiper were hatched in an incubator, and the young teetered without ever seeing their parents, the hereditary character of this trait, which must originally have been acquired, would be evident. As far as I know this experiment has never been tried. The eggs of gulls and terns have been hatched out in this way and the characteristic cry of the species has been given by the young who had never seen or heard their parents. In the same way a black skim-

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mer, a tern-like bird whose bill is especially adapted for skimming the water, has been hatched out away from the members of its species, and has skimmed the water like an expert. On the other hand, some bird songs do not seem sufficiently fixed in the species to be inherited, and the bird acquires the song of his associate of another species, yet he does inherit his own call-notes. The call-notes are of a more primitive character, and were acquired long before the song. In fact, some songs are evidently made up partly by a repetition of call-notes.

It was now high time to return if we wished the customary fish dinner, but, although we had come away without bringing lunch, intending to spend the morning only, the interest of the day was too great, and we determined to press on and explore the uttermost parts of the island. We were then about half-way across, after five hours' work, and had come perhaps a mile and a half. Verily the progress of the bird-lover is slow!

Our decision to go dinnerless was soon re-

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warded by a great ornithological treat. As we were standing by one of the numerous clear pools of water in its setting of rock, sphagnum, and sedges, a bird of the snipe family suddenly flew by us uttering a harsh scolding twitter, directed evidently at us. It immediately plumped with a little splash into the water and rode the tiny waves as gracefully as a swan, nodding its head meanwhile like a dove. It was evidently a phalarope, and its small size, lance-like bill and brown throat markings showed it to be the northern phalarope. "Sea-geese" they are called by New England fishermen, "gale-birds" by the Labradorians. At times it twittered rather sweetly like a barn-swallow, at times it emitted a harsh, rasping note, and occasionally we were favoured with a gentle little *ee-ep*. Once or twice it stopped to scratch its head with one foot, again it would circle about quickly on the water, again it would swim forward and continue its progression by walking up on to a rock. Then it would fly up and about us scolding threateningly, soon to return and plump down



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into the water. Occasionally it would swim among the sedges, skilfully threading its way in and out, bending low its head. It was a pretty sight, and we saw the same performance from two more in another pool.

These birds were all three anxious fathers, and their young charges were doubtless concealed in the sedges. Among the phalaropes, women's rights prevail to an alarming extent. In fact, I hesitate to publish in this good town of Boston the full extent of the triumph of the sex in this group of birds, lest the ladies may be stimulated to greater efforts for their "rights." The truth must be told, however, that not only is the male left in charge of the young, but he is even responsible for their hatching out. Worse than this, he is so henpecked that he adopts a plainer costume than his mate of the superior sex, and is actually considerably smaller than she. It was paternal anxiety, therefore, that we were witnessing. The ladies were doubtless gadding off at sea.

We were still pushing our way westward, when a fine rough-legged hawk, nearly black,

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but showing a lighter rump, flew by. Near Cape Harrison we had watched one poised motionless for several minutes, his wings spread to their full extent, sustained as though he were a kite by the strong wind.

The climax of the day was reached at the *ultima thule*. We had heard from time to time the harsh *cra-ak* and *cru-uk* of ravens, but hardly expected to find their nest. This latter consummation was rendered easy by the fact that a fully fledged young bird sat on a cliff fluttering his wings to be fed. On approaching the spot, the nest was seen in a recess of the cliff, about seventy feet above a pebbly beach, and fifteen or twenty feet from the top. It was entirely inaccessible without a rope, but we were content to examine it from a distance. It was as large as a great clothes-basket and made of weather-bleached branches of fir and spruce, twisted and gnarled as only arctic trees can be. The clear green water lapping the pebbly beach below, the pile of fragments fallen from the cliff, among which ferns grew in great profusion, the rugged and scarred

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face of the rock, the recess with its ancient nest, all made a picture I shall long remember.

*Sed revocari gradus.* It was now approaching supper-time, and we had to return. Three miles in a straight line seems but little, yet when part of it is deep sphagnum and reindeer moss, part is steep slippery rock, and valleys and hills are to be crossed, the distance is longer. However, our good hostess had saved our dinner, and we ate both dinner and supper together. They were both fish.



## CHAPTER III

### A LABRADOR NIGHT

"Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy !  
Thee, chauntress, oft, the woods among,  
I woo, to hear thy even song."

— "*Il Penseroso*," *Milton*.

"You may be a little cold some nights on mountain tops above the timber-line, — but you will see the stars, and by and by you can sleep enough in your town bed, or at least in your grave. Keep awake while you may in mountain mansions so rare." — *John Muir*.

ONE of the days of our enforced visit at Battle Island was devoted to the exploration of a part of St. Louis Inlet, some ten miles distant, and a night was spent here in the open.

At last we managed to procure two men who would brave the dangers of the flies, and sail us over in a fishing-boat to the Inlet. Every one at Battle Harbour seemed to have a

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great dread of the flies and "skeeters," and most of them said that no money would tempt them to go. "Ye will be devoured alive, sorrhs, and y'r best friends will not know ye." However, the sturdy and good-natured blacksmith and his assistant, Ned, consented to go, and we set sail over the beautiful clear water at five one morning. So clear is the water in these regions that the bottom can be seen even at considerable depths. Lovely bomb-shaped ctenophores, transparent creatures like jellyfishes, swam about everywhere. Some had two long tentacles, coral red or yellow at the base. Others were the size and shape of a thimble. The dark red arctic jellyfish with its long and nettle-bearing tentacles brightened the water in spots. Again the water looked dark with masses of swimming caplins, a fish about the size of a smelt, used for cod bait. At the entrance of the harbour, they were so numerous that many were stranded, flopping, on the rocks.

Partly sailing and partly rowing, we reached

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Green Island, around which small parties of black guillemots, sea-pigeons, or pigeons, as they are called, were swimming and diving. Their jet-black colour relieved by the large white patch on their wings makes them conspicuous objects whether swimming or flying. Their small heads and pointed bills and their nervous habit of dabbing at the water also serve to distinguish them. They go under water with a flop, spreading both wings, for they actually fly under water. They were evidently breeding in the rocky clefts and under the great broken masses of the island.

The black guillemot is one of the most abundant sea-birds all along the coast. I attribute their numbers to their shyness and to their skill in diving, so that they can more easily escape the fishermen's guns, while their habit of nesting in deep clefts and under rocks makes their eggs more secure from depredation. It is possible, and I offer this merely as a fanciful suggestion, the name pigeon may have been given to the black guillemot from its habit of bobbing its head in dabbing at the water, as

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the pigeon bobs its head in walking. It is interesting to note that the word *dove* is derived from a word meaning *diver*. These birds are therefore quits as far as the interchange of their names goes.

Small flocks of eiders, the American eider which breeds along the coast, passed us from time to time, flying low over the water. The strikingly marked males with the black bellies and white breasts, necks, and backs are easily recognized. The female is a great brown bird, looking very dark in some lights, and entirely lacks distinctive markings. Both birds have, however, a characteristic way of holding the bill pointing downward obliquely at a considerable angle instead of straight out before them like most ducks. This habit, we found, made a capital field mark. By this we could often recognize the birds when the light prevented our making out any colours.

Passing by Duck and Captain Jack's Islands, in St. Louis Inlet, we entered the little Mary Harbour. Now a harbour on the Labrador coast does not always mean, as one would suppose,

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an anchoring place for vessels, with perhaps wharves and a village or at least a few houses, for in this case, as in others, there was not a sign of human habitation, whether on shore or on the water. For the time being, Mary Harbour belonged to us. The men set their salmon nets at the mouth of the Mary River, which rushes down over rocks in rapids and small falls. We soon caught more trout than we could eat, the men with strings tied to crooked alder sticks, baiting their hooks with pork, and I with a fly rod and flies, and I am frank to confess that the men caught the most and the largest fish.

The Mary River is worth exploring, and we found much of interest, as we pushed our way back along its rocky and swampy shores. It expanded at frequent intervals, from a boisterous stream into calm bays or ponds, bordered by swamps of alders, larches, and black spruces, with grasses and sedges pushing out into the shallow water.

The barren hilltops around were glacial smoothed Laurentian rocks, with their rein-



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deer moss and sphagnum, and curlew berry and other plants with which we had become familiar at Battle Harbour. And there is no more comfortable bed than this same reindeer moss and curlew berry vine, which has a springiness like that of a hair mattress. On a bed of this in the lee of a rock and in a groove made by a glacier thousands of years ago, we stretched ourselves at sunset, after an arduous day on the water and on land. Sunset was at eight o'clock.

An hour later I recorded the interesting sights and sounds. The light is still good. There is a pink glow in the northwest, which is flecked with dark blue clouds. Overhead the sky is deep blue and is luminous with soft fleecy clouds. No stars have yet appeared, and there is a gentle breeze from the southwest, from which the ledge of rock protects me as I lie on the hilltop. From behind comes the continuous roar of the rapids and falls of the Mary River. At my feet, looking like a winding land-locked lake, is Mary Harbour, surrounded by barren rocky hills, the little valleys

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green with firs, spruces, and larches, which in places rise to a height of fifteen feet.

In the valley immediately below me, a group of gnarled and twisted spruces calls to my mind one of Doré's illustrations for Dante's "Inferno." The spruces have risen to a height of five or six feet, bent and broken by winter's snows, twisted and torn by stormy winds. At last they have succumbed to fire, and their bleached trunks and limbs, standing out against the dark background of lichen-covered rock look like lost souls writhing in purgatory.

Of the bird voices, the most beautiful is that of the hermit-thrush, whose divine song has been wafted to my ears at frequent intervals during the evening. His is a pure and holy ecstasy, and no better setting could it have than this lonely bay, with its subdued roar of waters for an undertone. The song ceased at nine o'clock.

During the evening I have heard almost constantly, the calls of Alice's thrush, a night-hawk like *speke*, but varied greatly from time to time, so that it also resembles the familiar

## A LABRADOR NIGHT

call of the veery. At last two birds begin to sing about nine o'clock and continue singing for ten or fifteen minutes. An interesting song it is, with a single or double preliminary note, followed by a long veery-like vibration, sweet yet mournful. How unlike the song of the olive-backed thrush, yet the birds look so much alike that a person unfamiliar with the two might well doubt that they were distinct species.

The white-crowned sparrow, the most common bird of this region, sings frequently all the evening until shortly after nine, and one white-throated sparrow gives his lovely pea-body song several times, but is silent after a quarter of nine. A spotted sandpiper frequently complains, but I heard him not after half-past nine. At this hour there is still a glow in the west, and but a few stars are to be seen in the blue sky. At ten I can easily see to tell time by my watch. All is silent save the roar of the waters which soon lull me to sleep.

At midnight I am awake long enough to wonder at the faint colour still in the west, and



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to tell time by my watch. I sleep again until two. The glow is still in the west. Can the sun be going to rise where it went down, or am I mistaken as to the points of the compass? I soon realize that the centre of the pink glow is toward the northeast, and that the glow in the northwest, where the sun set, is very faint in comparison. At a quarter-past two a spotted sandpiper calls, and the note of a white-winged crossbill, as he flies over, is heard. At 2.25 the hermit-thrushes begin to sing, and shortly afterward the Alice's thrushes. Then I become aware of the familiar undertone of robins' songs, and strange they sound in this wilderness. At twenty minutes of three the first white-crowned sparrows tune their curious and somewhat mournful lay, and shortly afterward the very different and more beautiful song of the white-throated sparrow is heard, rising slowly and deliberately from the glen across the harbour. A shelldrake flies down from the ponds for his morning fish, uttering a croaking quack.

The surface of the harbour stretching out

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before me, with its irregular winding shores, and its setting of dark rounded hills, is now all aglow with the reflection of the reddening sky. It is nearly calm, but the surface of the water is here and there roughened by a slight breeze. There is nothing soft in the outline of these hills. They are stern and uncompromising, and heaped about in wild confusion. In these surroundings one can thoroughly appreciate the bird voices heard on every hand. There is no discordant note. All is perfect harmony.

The sunrise is of wonderful beauty. The glow in the northeast becomes a bright yellow, while above this float pink and crimson clouds with dark blue upper edgings. The colours intensify. There is a pink glow among the hills, and the distant dark clouds are now all luminous with a pink blush. Again a change, and the clouds above fade, and at quarter of four the upper edge of his majesty the sun appears in a valley between the hills.

Now a gentle rain begins to fall and a rainbow appears in the west. I unconsciously



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repeat to myself, "Rainbow in the morning, sailors take warning," and I also realize that this is Friday, the thirteenth. The whole is certainly a grand combination for misfortune, but I keep my ideas to myself, thinking that the men would decline to sail if they knew all the fearful possibilities.

Breakfast was eaten on the rocks by the shore in a pouring rain, but the bacon, red trout, bread, and tea were delicious, and oilskins and sou'westers kept us dry. The poor men had spent a wretched night with the mosquitoes. Ned had had a hard time. "The skiters pecked me all night, sorrh. Me 'ands h'eeched so, sorrh, I could not sleep," and he walked back and forth slapping the "skiters" all night, and cursing them. The blacksmith had got his knees wet in the soft sphagnum moss, where he had insisted on pitching the tent, so he had gone out to the boat and tried to sleep on the rock ballast with a red handkerchief tied over his head and face. He believed with the Irishman, "if you can't be aisy, be as aisy as you can." However, he was in very

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good spirits, as he had caught two good-sized salmon and two large trout in his nets. He was anxious that I should put the larger salmon on my hook and pull him in, so I could say I caught him. "And I will swear that the gentleman caught him hisself, sorrh." However, I did not succumb to the temptation.

We set sail in an "Irishman's hurricane" — plenty of rain and no wind. As my friend and I were talking of birds, the blacksmith said that the prettiest bird he ever saw in Mary Harbour stood fishing from the rocks. "She was Micky Loomer's daughter, sorrh. He was an Englishman, sorrh, the prettiest man iver you would see, sorrh. He married an Eskimo squaw, very poor-looking, sorrh. She had but the one eye, sorrh. They had no children, so they adopted this girl. She was the child of a man named Tubbs, sorrh. And a very foine-looking girl as iver I see, sorrh. But when she became a woman, sorrh, she was very ornary-looking. Yes, Micky Loomer and his squaw lived in an igloo by the falls for thirty years, sorrh. This was only in the summer. They

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were twenty miles back in the woods in the winters. It was trout and salmon fishing he was in the summer, sorrh, and trapping in the winter." "What did he do with all his money?" "Rum, sorrh, Bottle 'Arbor rum, sorrh. He could have had a barrel of money, sorrh, but it all went to rum, sorrh. Oh, yes, he is dead, but he lived to be nearly eighty, sorrh."

As we passed a point, a duck waddled down from the rocks and swam off. Its light colour and cocked up tail suggested a gull, but with a glass the characteristic markings of a male king eider-duck were easily made out,—the projection at the base of the bill and the spectacle-like appearance of the side face.

We soon caught a good breeze and bounded over and through the water, but were well protected against rain and spray by our "oilers" and reached Battle Harbour safely.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EASTERN COAST OF LABRADOR

"The sea-gulls wheeled around the rocky cape  
And skimmed their long wings lightly o'er the flood;  
The fog rose up in many a spectral shape."

— *S. C. E. Mayo.*

"North, East, and South, there are reefs and breakers  
You would never dream of in smooth weather,  
That toss and gore the sea for acres,  
Bellowing and gnashing and snarling together."

— *J. R. Lowell.*

FROM the rocks of Battle Island some bright-eyed boys discovered the smoke of the mail-steamer *Virginia Lake* coming down from St. Johns, Newfoundland, about ten o'clock on the morning of July 15th. At noon we were climbing up her steep steps as she lay at anchor at the northern mouth of the harbour, surrounded by a throng of fishing-boats.

The *Virginia Lake* is a staunch screw steamer, considerably larger than the *Home*, and well fitted for conflicts with the ice, as she is em-



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ployed as a sealer every spring. Her decks were cluttered with lumber, oil casks, and odds and ends of every description. She had not the air of a well-appointed yacht or tourist steamer, but both she and her bluff captain gave one the impression of staunchness and reliability. To the north there is but one lighthouse on the whole rugged coast, and no fog-horns in a region where fog abounds, as well as rocks and reefs innumerable and unchartered. *A priori* the trip seemed hazardous, but after one knows the *Virginia Lake* and Captain Parsons, a feeling of confidence takes the place of any anxiety that may have existed. The knowledge of the coast shown by the good captain, and his conscientious care in guiding the vessel are unexcelled. Every rock, every shoal, every tickle, he knows as one knows the streets of one's native city. A glance through the fog at a headland, the counterpart to untrained eyes of hundreds along the coast, tells him at once where he is. The "rote" or sound of the surf on the rocks, or the echo of the whistle from a cliff unseen in the fog, give him the needed clue



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to his position. In doubt he anchors and takes no undue chances. He is always on the bridge. Like the bears he must take a long winter's sleep to make up for his summer's vigil.

For twelve days, — days packed full of interesting incidents and sights, — we made our home on the *Virginia Lake*. During this time we steamed as far north as the Moravian Mission of Nain in latitude  $56^{\circ} 30'$  north, and returned to our starting-place at Battle Harbour. Nain is the most northern port of call of this mail-boat, and is not often reached until August on account of the ice. We were certainly fortunate to reach it.

Going down north, — it is with a wrench that I use this Labradorian phraseology instead of up north as the maps would seem to indicate, — we stopped at some forty-five ports of call, and at about the same number on the return. At one of these places, Hawk's Harbour, where there is a whale factory, we moored alongside of a wharf; at all others we dropped anchor while a small boat, the "mail-boat," was sent ashore. The delivery of the mail on the way

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north, as well as the landing of freight and passengers, is one of the chief functions of the steamer. On the return the answers to the letters are received, as well as casks of fish-oil, and any other freight that is ready. Both going and returning, the ship's doctor, who is employed for the purpose by the Newfoundland government, holds clinics in his little cabin, or visits those too ill to come aboard. Doctor Boyle is a busy man, and right conscientious work he does. On one day, when we stopped at a dozen stations crowded with fishermen, the doctor attended to nearly one hundred patients between dawn and midnight. At every harbour boats put off with patients for his consideration. Many of them are hardy and robust looking, and pull manfully at the oars, but have some slight or fancied ailment. They go back happy with a bottle of black stuff. Others, with bandaged hands or arms, are suffering from salt water sores, deep ugly ulcers, that need skilled attention. Many a poor soul, male or female, comes aboard with a swollen face, having waited perhaps two weeks

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for the mail-boat and the doctor to rid them of the aching tooth. They go back triumphantly happy, leaving gory streaks in the water behind them. Others are hardly able to drag themselves up the ship's steps and show evidences of deep suffering in their faces. Some of these the doctor sends back relieved, others cannot be left behind and are taken care of aboard the ship until they reach one of Doctor Grenfell's hospitals or are returned to their friends or a hospital in Newfoundland. On board the *Virginia Lake* they are kindly ministered to by the doctor and by his nurse, the poetic Peddel, author of the "Poems of Newfoundland," a little book I was glad to purchase of the author, and in which he kindly wrote his name and mine. The poems are interesting, and as the author remarked, "There is a deal of deep thought in them." Other patients the doctor visits ashore, going either in the mail-boat, or in a boat sent by the patients' friends. The poor patient on shore must be content with but few visits during the season, as the comings and goings of the *Virginia Lake* are few and



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uncertain. The doctor does the best he can under the circumstances, he gives good service and shirks not, and he appears to be appreciated.

Parts of the coast that we saw imperfectly or not at all on our way north, owing to fog or the lateness of the hour, we were often able to see more perfectly on our return. In this way, a little patched it is true, we were able to get a fairly clear idea of the entire coast. For the sake of simplicity I have described it in continuity, as in my account of the southern coast.

Here, as always, the observation of birds was our chief object, so our post was either on the bridge or on the steamer's bows. Here we stood noting the numbers and species of birds except when we were eating or sleeping, and it is only fair to say that we did not cut short either of these functions. As an appetizer and sleep inducer I can highly recommend the air of Labrador.

At last we are off! The *Virginia Lake* steams steadily north into a northeast wind. Fog drifts in on all sides. The stranded icebergs

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that we have watched from Battle Island must needs remain unphotographed. The circle of tumbled hills about St. Louis Bay is blotted out by the fog. However, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," for, owing to this same storm, we are treated to a sight long to be remembered. As we steam beside a headland of rough and broken granitic rocks, now visible for a moment, now wrapped in the fog, we find ourselves in the midst of a great number of shearwaters, the "hagdons" of the sailors, birds that delight in stormy weather and are rarely seen close to the land except at such times. The flock extends for several miles and we venture to estimate the numbers at five thousand. It is but an estimate, and I am inclined to think an underestimate. In this vast throng, continually rising and skimming out to sea, only three sooty shearwaters can be seen. All the rest are greater shearwaters. The three look as black as crows in comparison with their white and gray relatives. The sailors call them black hagdons.

These shearwaters are interesting birds, and



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it is only of comparatively late years that they have been understood. Although July is our midsummer, it is with them midwinter, but not of their discontent if one may judge by their graceful, happy flight. They breed in the southern hemisphere, near the antarctic regions, and come north across the equator to spend their winter, our summer, with us. We had seen a few from time to time in our voyages, but were quite unprepared for the multitude that now surrounded us. Somewhat smaller than a herring gull, their tapering, cigar-shaped bodies and long, narrow, clipper-built wings give them a grace and speed that are hardly attained in the gulls. With outstretched and almost motionless wings, slightly decurved, they glide over the waves, following them so closely that one momentarily expects to see the birds disappear in the foam. Again they swing about in graceful curves, turning from side to side, so that sometimes one, sometimes the other, wing almost touches the great surges. All their motions on the wing are graceful in the extreme and devoid of any

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appearance of effort. Again they ride the water lightly in companies of a hundred, or swim rapidly over the surface to seize some delectable morsel, holding their heads up, their wings partly spread. In rising from the water the birds show less grace, and a large flock makes the water foam as they try to push away the surface, paddling vigorously with their feet.

In former times, whenever bait was scarce, fishermen used to catch them with hook and line as they crowded about their boats on the Banks, strip off their skins, and chop them up into small pieces to bait the trawls. A fisherman at Battle Harbour had shot a couple for his supper while we were there. They are good eating when skinned and freed from fat, as I can attest from an experiment in former years.

The characteristic thing about the numerous harbours along this coast is the fact that they are invisible until one is actually in them. The steamer suddenly turns in toward a rocky coast, barren, wind-swept. There is no sign

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of human life, except perhaps a cairn of rocks on some high hill. These cairns are common along the shore, and bear for some unknown reason the curious name of "American men." On goes the steamer at full speed as if she were bent on casting herself on the cruel rocks that are lashed by the surf. "Starboard easy," calls the captain, and the steamer turns a bit, and opens up a narrow tickle, into which she glides, passing the high precipitous rocks on either side so closely that one can almost toss the proverbial biscuit ashore. Again the vessel turns and emerges, after half a mile perhaps of this ticklish course, into a wonderful land-locked harbour, a mountain tarn as it were, in which a small fleet of vessels is riding in safety, and along whose shores are clustered fish-stages and tilts, and all is bustle and activity.

The first of these stopping-places, and they are all alike and all different, is Spear Harbour, and I go ashore in the mail-boat, and clamber up a fish-stage dripping with fish "gurry." While John delivers the mail and flirts with all the petticoats in sight, I scramble around



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over the rocks, noting all the birds I can, picking a few flowers and gathering lichens for botanical friends in Cambridge. Climbing a steep ascent, I look down into another mountain tarn, similar to the one where the steamer lies at anchor, except that this is fresh water. Sometimes in the short fifteen minutes or half-hour ashore I make note of some interesting habit of pipit or horned lark or other bird. But John is calling me and I hurry back, jumping from rock to rock and splashing through the wet sphagnum, for fear of being left in this barren spot until the steamer returns. I should enjoy the exile exceedingly, no doubt, but then I should miss the rest of the trip and the wonders beyond. I jump into the boat and take my turn at an oar as the air is nipping, or grasp the tillerless rudder-head and guide the boat to the steamer. Arrived there we worm our way in between her sides and the mass of fishing-boats clustered about her steps. These same ship's steps, by the way, have had repairs, so that one step near the top is a little higher than the others.

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Every man, with few exceptions, trips on this and gracefully sprawls forward before reaching the steamer's decks.

The coast along here is rugged and fine. Between Occasional Harbour — "Occasionable" as it is usually called — and Square Island we passed a great arch of rock, through which we could see the green bushy forest in a mountain gully beyond. The cliff that frames this "hole in the wall" is two or three hundred feet high and the cliffs extend some distance along the shore at this point, which bears the name of Cape St. Michael.

Snug Harbour is indeed a snug harbour. Great rocky walls surround a placid basin in which float a brig and several schooners. One schooner is anchored close to a small iceberg that has managed to wander in through the narrow but deep tickle. Our steward takes advantage of this opportunity and hacks off great pieces of this Greenland ice and brings it aboard in the mail-boat. There are several other icebergs at the mouth of the narrow tickle that are unable to gain entrance.





Comfort Bight and the "Virginia Lake"



Whale Factory at Forteau

Photograph by Dr. E. A. Crockett



## THE EASTERN COAST OF LABRADOR

At Hawk's Harbour, next day, we pass the dead body of a whale at the moorings, and come alongside of a wharf at the whale factory. The whale is a finback and shows his white and slashed sides uppermost as he floats. While we are here the whaling steamer *Hawk* arrives from a cruise, and all is excitement to discover whether she has any game. On she comes with almost twice the speed of our ship, with her little gun pointing straight ahead from the bow. Her trip has been fruitless, she bears no spoils.

Whale factories are neither picturesque nor savoury. They have sprung up in abundance along the Newfoundland and Labrador coast during the last few years. This form of whaling is a new industry, and was established in Newfoundland in 1898. We saw two whale factories on the Newfoundland coast, namely, at Lark Harbour and Hawke Bay, and three on the Labrador coast, — at Forteau, Cape Charles, and here at Hawk's Harbour. They are all alike, — an ugly square box-like building, several smaller buildings, great tanks for

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steaming, boiling, and settling, a black cylindrical chimney and a slip or inclined plane, very slippery in sooth, on which the bodies of the whales are drawn up. Every bit of the whale is utilized. Oil is made of the blubber, the whalebone, so called, in the mouth, is of course valuable, the real bones are ground and used for lime, and the rest of the great carcass is made into "guano." In fact, all is used but the smell, and this is lavishly wasted about the neighbourhood.

Each factory has its powerful little steamer which courses the seas on the alert for its especial prey, into which from gun or cannon mounted on a pivot in the bow it discharges a five-foot harpoon of about one hundred pounds in weight. Concealed in the tip of the harpoon is a bomb with time-fuse attached. This explodes inside the body of the whale. A stout line is attached to the harpoon and to a powerful winch on the steamer's deck. How long the whales can survive this warfare is a serious question.

Again we turned north, and sailed first along

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a rugged and precipitous coast and then along a flatter one. In fact, parts of the coast are low and devoid of scenic features, but their desolation and wildness give them always an interest and charm. We are always among a maze of islands that line the coast, and we cast anchor at Bolsters' Rock, Comfort Bight, Frenchman's Island, Punch Bowl, Spotted Islands, Batteau, Domino, Indian Tickle, and all the rest.

At Frenchman's Island my companion found a nest of young horned larks, sunk in the reindeer moss and matted arctic vegetation. It was neatly made of dried grass and a few feathers. It contained three dark-skinned nestlings covered sparingly with light sulphur yellow down. There was also one gray egg thickly speckled with fine brown spots which formed a distinct ring at the larger end.

The horned lark is an interesting bird and one of which we made special study while in Labrador, for there are many points to be cleared up as to the exact status of these birds in that country. From the point of view of the student



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of evolution and geographical variation, the horned larks are of great interest. In America alone over a score of forms, or subspecies as they are called, have been named. The extremes are very different, but by numerous connecting links they so glide into each other that it is often difficult to separate the different forms. These differences are due to differences in environment acting on a peculiarly plastic organization. In this case the student is not troubled by missing links, but rather the reverse, an *embarras de richesses* as it were.

While the deep fiords extending into the land, and the numerous islands along the coast, all point to a former subsidence of the land and constitute "drowned" valleys and coast, there is also very palpable evidence of recent elevation of the land. At frequent intervals all along the shore we saw splendid examples of raised beaches. Thus at Spotted Islands above the present beach of rounded pebbles and cobblestones was a green patch, above which was another distinct cobblestone beach.

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Again there was a green stretch of turf, and again another distinct beach, elevated sixty feet or more above the present level. Everywhere the rocks belong to the ancient group of granites and syenites, and are everywhere crossed by black dikes of trap rock. These dikes in places stand out black and forbidding, but are usually worn back into chasms. Where they cross the hillsides, they at times appear like straight green roads, in a country where no roads are, for in sooth there is not a road along this whole coast of Labrador, much less a horse or cow. In the shelter of the depression caused by the erosion of the dikes, fir and spruce, Labrador tea and laurel, manage to exist, while all around is wind-swept rock, naked except for the lichen growth which stains its rugged sides. Boulders are common along this coast, left by the glaciers. Some appear to be resting so insecurely on the hillsides that one wonders whether a good push would not send them rolling down the sides.

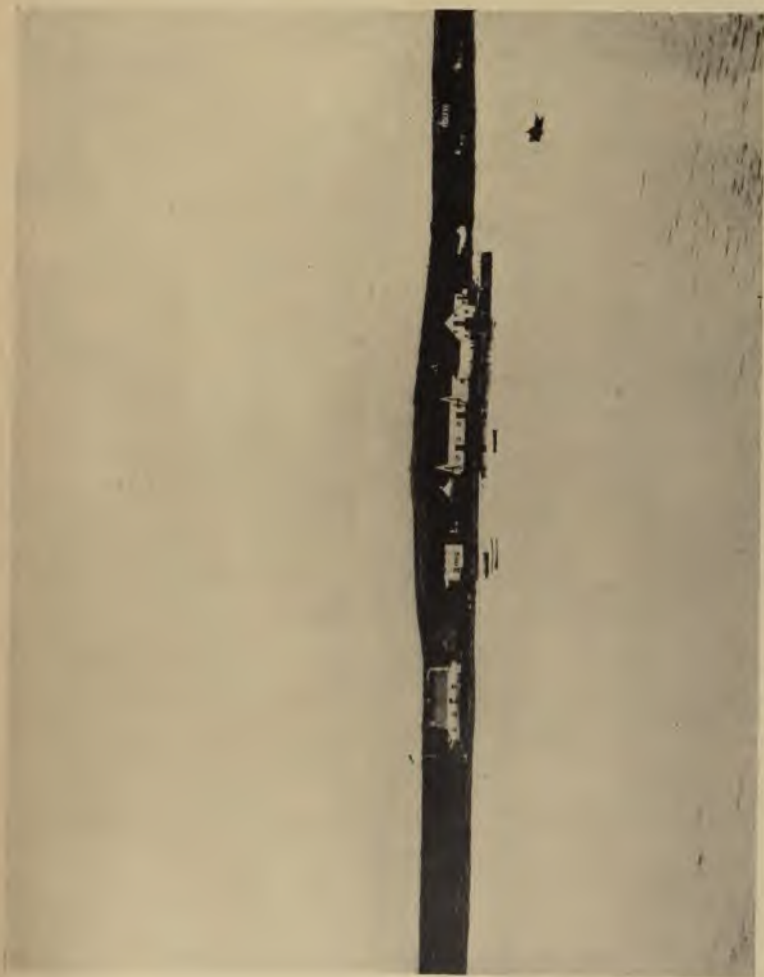
At Batteau there were fifty schooners crowded

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into the narrow harbour and fishing-boats galore. Among the fish-stages and turf-covered tilts on the shore, children and women furnished bits of bright colour. All was activity, and fish splitting was going on at the stages ashore and on the schooner decks in the harbour.

Here the captain of a Danish topmast schooner came aboard to pay his respects to our commander. He was a stout man, dressed in rough tweeds and wearing a red fez. His picturesqueness was increased by a long china pipe which he was solemnly smoking.

On the third day of our cruise northward we steamed into Sandwich Bay and dropped anchor off Cartwright. It was the first time I had seen these magic letters, H. B. C., — Hudson's Bay Company. What a wealth of interesting history they recall! For over 230 years this company has been buying furs and skins of the natives of British North America. No wonder the letters have been interpreted, "Here before Christ," for the company generally gets ahead of the missionaries. Cart-



The Hudson's Bay Company's Post at Cartwright





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wright consists of the Hudson's Bay Company's buildings, — a great white painted storehouse on a wharf, and the factor's house, a comfortable-looking mansion, also painted white, — and in addition two or three other houses. Everything is as neat as wax about the post. In the store one can buy almost anything except furs. Furs are for the company's disposal the other side of the water, at prices that would probably astonish the natives who won them from the wilderness.

We had over an hour on shore, and we pushed back through the dripping spruce and fir woods, here ten or twelve feet high, and explored a barren hillside. White-crowned sparrows were everywhere about the post, robins were common. We found a pair each of juncos, savanna sparrows, pipits, fox-sparrows, and blackpoll warblers, while redpoll linnets were romping about in small flocks, singing as best they know how, which is not saying much.

In the small graveyard at Cartwright is a white stone with this inscription:

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In Memory of  
George Cartwright  
Captain in his Majesty's 37th Regiment of Foot  
Second son of William Cartwright, Esq., of  
Marnham Hall in Nottinghamshire.  
Who in March 1770 made a settlement  
on the coast of Labrador  
Where he remained for sixteen years.  
He died at Mansfield in Nottinghamshire  
the 19th of February 1819.

also of  
John Cartwright  
Lieutenant of the Guernsey, five years surrogate of  
Newfoundland  
And afterwards Major of the Nottinghamshire militia  
He died on the 23rd of September 1824.

To these distinguished brothers, who in zealously protecting and befriending paved the way for the introduction of Christianity to the natives of these benighted regions.

This memorial is affectionately inscribed  
by their niece Frances Dorothy Cartwright.

I was much interested in reading these lines, as I had already an affection for George Cartwright, of whom I shall have more to say in a later chapter.

As we left Sandwich Bay we passed the Horsechops Island, with its black basaltic cliffs rising to a height of over three hundred

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feet. The red syenite and green alpine vegetation and black basalt produce beautiful colour effects. Unfortunately the Mealy Mountains, two thousand feet high and over, whose range extends along the northerly shore of Sandwich Bay, were then blotted out by the fog, but we were rewarded by a splendid view of them on our return trip. Dark blue and forbidding they looked, but they were surrounded by the wonderful yellow glow of an arctic sunset, which lit up the sky and sea.

The *Virginia Lake* anchored in some quiet harbour that night, for fog and rain made progress impossible on this rugged coast, but early in the morning she was steaming up Hamilton Inlet. This is also called Groswater or Eskimo Bay, while beyond Rigolet it is called Lake Melville. Into the head of this empties the Hamilton River, whose waters plunge down 760 feet in twelve miles, with a sheer descent of 302 feet. These Grand Falls have but seldom been seen by white men. It was from Rigolet that Hubbard set forth on his ill-fated expedition.

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Hamilton Inlet is the largest of the fiords on the Labrador coast, stretching back 150 miles into the interior, with an average width of fourteen miles. As we steamed along in the quiet water we could watch the hills on either side, here white with reindeer moss and there dark with spruces and firs. Arrived at Rigolet, we prepared for a day in the woods, as there was much freight to be disembarked, and the timber had to be made into a raft before it could be got ashore. All was bustle and expectation. Our steamer anchored in a lovely basin. Near at hand lay the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer *Pelican*, a rakish-looking vessel well prepared for battling with the ice. She was soon to start for Hudson Bay, going north around Cape Chidley. What visions of exploration and adventure, rare birds and wonderful scenery, this steamer evoked! I felt the "lure of the Labrador wild" tugging hard at my heart-strings, — whatever this may mean from the point of view of an anatomist. If one could only lead a double life in the actual sense and be in two places at once!



Rigolet



The Hudson's Bay Company's Steamer "Pelican"





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On the other side was anchored the schooner *Swallow*, whose crew appeared to be largely Eskimos clad in motley patched garments. The captain had a broad, flat, Eskimo face, with a faint and straggling moustache, while a fringe of scattered hairs surrounded his chin. The faces of two small Eskimo boys in the crew seemed to be mostly grins. We jumped into the mail-boat and were soon at the wharf, back of which extend the white buildings of the Hudson's Bay Post, for this post is the whole of Rigolet. There are a half a dozen buildings in all, the stores, the comfortable factor's house, and several smaller buildings, all connected by a board walk with a white painted railing. Groups of half-breeds loitered about, some partly Eskimo, others plainly Indian. Eskimo dogs were lying about everywhere, resting in anticipation of the hard winter. They were for the most part yellowish white in colour.

First I go shopping and purchase a pair of mittens, for my woollen gloves do not keep out the cold on shipboard. I also buy a pair of

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"skin boots," made of shaved sealskin and so neatly sewed by the Eskimos that they are water-tight. My companion adds to his collection of racquettes or snow-shoes by purchasing a beautiful pair of "beaver-tails." These and the "long-tails" are apparently not so commonly used as the oval tailless racquettes.

I am also so fortunate as to be able to purchase a couple of Eskimo dolls from one of the natives. These dolls, fourteen inches in height, represent a male and female Eskimo, and are dressed in fur with every detail of the clothing perfect, from the hoods to the neatly made skin boots. The tail of the sack of the female doll distinguishes her sex, as does also a fur-clad papoose in the hood. The faces are carved in wood and show the flat countenance and oblique eyes.

Shod in our skin boots and oilskins, we journey into the forest, here reaching the respectable height of twenty feet in places. Water is everywhere, and the sphagnum and reindeer moss are soaking with it. It requires

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considerable faith to believe that the thin skin boots will keep out water, but they stand the test perfectly this day. We feel as gay as the proverbial sailor ashore, although the mosquitoes and flies do their best to quench our spirits. How glad I am I am not treading the narrow fiords and winding tickles of my native city! Fox-sparrows and white-crowns are singing. The elusive Tennessee warbler mocks us as he has done before. We hear his song, but cannot catch even a glimpse of the singer.

Ernest Thompson says that it is safe to attribute any strange shrieks or wails to the Canada jay when in a region where this bird is to be found. This is a good rule, for it would require much ink to record all the variety of groans, squeaks, rattles, and shrieks uttered by this bird. Besides his voice, his fluffy body and short rounded wings, on which he is constantly sailing from tree to tree, make him conspicuous. The Labrador bird is a distinct subspecies with a darker plumage. The young Labrador jays, as well as young Canada jays,

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are as dark all over as catbirds. In fact, when they hop along with their tails cocked up between the wings, they resemble overgrown editions of this latter bird.

As we steam out of Hamilton Inlet in the evening, the fogs disappear, the wind shifts to the northwest, and the blue sky is lit up with fleecy pink clouds, while the sun sets clear for the first time in many days. The effect of the change of weather on the spirits of the passengers and crew is marked, and a square dance is performed on deck to the music of a graphophone. The globe-trotting English sportsman has left us at Cartwright, going up the river after salmon, and the crew of lumbermen have departed at Rigolet, so that the company is now small. However, the poet takes his turn in the dance with the Cambridge school-teacher, who is intent on seeing everything, while the Frenchman with the Irish name is in his element. The stewardess and some of the sailors fill up the number. All is jollity. The clouds have rolled away. Such is the psychological effect of a little sunshine after storm!



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Behind us is the sun setting in a halo of great glory, shedding a wonderful purple light over the hills. Before us is the appearance of a whirling snow-storm. Thousands of kittiwake gulls cover the water, and as we push on they rise in bodies of five hundred or more, and whirl about like gusts of snow driven by the wind, their pure white plumage lit up by the rays of the sun. Silent for the most part, they occasionally emit cries which suggest the syllables *kittiwake*. Five days later on the return trip, near Cape Harrison, we again ran into a flock of the same size. The appearance of a snow-storm was here more perfect, for there was a thick fog bank on the edge of which the kittiwakes played. The sun shining on the birds, before the fog shut them out, was very striking. Kittiwakes, or any small gull or tern, are called here "ticklers," possibly because they fly about "tickles."

Indian Harbour, Smoky Tickle, and White Bear Islands were touched at in the night as we went north, but during daylight on our return. At Indian Harbour, at the northern

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entrance to Hamilton Inlet, is the northernmost of Doctor Grenfell's hospitals.

Near Makkovick Island, a small duck appeared in the water off our starboard bow. It looked nearly black, with the exception of a large white patch in front of the eye. It swam about with its tail cocked up, and dove frequently, flopping out its wings for subaqueous flight. As the wings were spread, a small amount of white was displayed on their inner edges close to the body. Here was an interesting case for diagnosis, and by exclusion as well as by noting all these points, there can be no doubt but this was a young male harlequin duck. One does not often have specimens at hand for comparison, but in this case I referred at once to some skins of harlequin ducks I had obtained from the Eskimos, and confirmed the diagnosis. The adult male is a wonderful bird, with his various colours and markings, and well deserves the name of harlequin.

At Houlton, the next morning after leaving Rigolet, we went ashore for twenty minutes, and caught a glimpse of a pair of Lapland longspurs

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that were evidently breeding here. The fishermen were in despair, for the fish had not "struck in" and the ice was so bad that they must needs take up their traps for fear of losing them.

Notwithstanding the clear sunset last night, we ran into a northeaster in the most exposed place on the whole coast, and for six hours we battled with the wind and waves in our attempt to get by Cape Harrison. In this blow four schooners dragged their anchors and went ashore along the coast, breaking up on the jagged rocks. On the return trip we picked up several of their crews, — each man had saved a bag of clothes, but nothing else.

We caught but a glimpse of Cape Harrison, a lofty headland of light-coloured gneiss or perhaps syenite, slashed with black trap dikes, and set off by a great talus slope at the foot. On the return trip we saw but little more, for a fog blanket came in and enveloped the cape in a mist so thick that the captain turned the steamer around and skilfully returned to the sunlight within the shelter of the harbour.

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Again he ventured out, but keeping this time so close to the cape, that the rote could be heard and the white line of surf seen at the base.

That night we anchored at Long Tickle, and a long tickle it proved to be, for we remained there all the next day. The wind blew hard from the northeast, and the fog scudded over our heads. Outside was the pack ice, but in the tickle the water was as smooth as a mill-pond. However, we had a morning ashore. The island at Long Tickle is bare and desolate in the extreme, of glacier-smoothed granitic rock, cut by two series of dikes and rising in the centre to the height of a hundred feet or more. The vegetation is more scanty than at Battle Harbour. Our friends the pipits, horned larks, and white-crowns were on hand to greet us.

The captain and all the passengers, four in number besides ourselves, climbed to the top of the island for a lookout. This was not encouraging. Outside at the mouth of the tickle was the pack ice stretching out into the

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fog. The wind was fierce and searching, and we were glad to get down in the lee of the rocks. The captain as usual was non-committal as to plans, and we were wise enough to ask no questions. The morning passed all too quickly in exploring the island and studying birds, during which occupation I incidentally learned something about Eskimo dogs to be related later.

Entering by invitation an Eskimo hut of rough beams and sods, I found an Eskimo woman sewing on skin boots of raw sealskin. Every now and then she stopped to chew the hide so as to soften it to her liking. The door of the hut was not over four feet high, and I could not stand erect inside. I sat down on a bench near a small iron stove, the heat of which was comfortable. A part of the room was curtained off for sleeping. The walls were papered in places with newspapers. Everything was neat and clean. The skins of a black bear, of a fox, of a harp-seal, of a muskrat, and of a woodchuck were all produced for my inspection. I purchased the sealskin.



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There were several tilts of Eskimos or half-breeds on the island, each with its quota of dogs, and but one or two tilts of Newfoundland fishermen. One of these I visited, and was struck with the neatness and comfort of the place, due to the efforts of the only white woman on the island.

While we were anchored at Long Tickle, an old Eskimo and his wife came on board, Joel Joseph and Eva. Joel is fifty-eight inches tall. John, the sailorman, who knows some things and readily invents stories about everything else, says he is sixty years old. John is a character. He is also a joker. He sits in a steamer chair on the after-deck and squirts tobacco juice about like an American lord.

The wind subsided in the late afternoon, both anchors were raised, and the *Virginia Lake* slowly steamed out into the pack. It was cold, a chilling, penetrating cold, which was not shown by the thermometer at 41°. Our thermometer on deck on this trip averaged about 44° at morning and night, about 50° at midday. Once it sank as low as 39°. We took

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the temperature once in the saloon at the end of dinner, and found it was 59°. Gloves and mittens, two pairs of thick stockings, leather vests, and sweaters do not keep out the cold when one is on deck. As a Moravian missionary said, "It is a lazy wind, — too lazy to go around, it goes through one." Kipling puts it thus:

"When the darkened Fifties dip to the North  
And frost and the fog divide the air,  
And the day is dead at his breaking-forth,  
Sirs, it is bitter beneath the Bear!"

Northern phalaropes swam around a berg. Sea-pigeons and burgomaster gulls sported about. Several finback whales came up between the floes and spouted. About eight in the evening the sun appeared in the northwest, round and red, and the light was wonderful on sky and ice and sea.

At Makkovik Island the ice pack prevented our entering the harbour. While the boat is slowing down, a man at the masthead calls that some men have crossed the ice to a rocky island, where they are waving a flag to us.

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The ship is stopped, the mailboat is lowered, and rapidly picks its way among the ice blocks to the island, landing behind a huge berg that breaks the force of the sea. It soon reappears directly in the path of the sun, comes alongside, and we are off. It is now 9 P. M., and I am writing this on deck. Ahead is the salmon-coloured sky of sunset; on the right a line of ice; on the left dark rounded hills spotted with snow and shrouded in their cross valleys with fog. The water is smooth, for, as a sailor says, the ice is "handy-by." I turn in while it is still light at ten o'clock, and at once fall asleep, nor do I feel the shock and grinding of the vessel against the ice which wake my companion that night.

## CHAPTER V

### FISH AND FISHERMEN

" Now, brothers, for the icebergs  
Of frozen Labrador,  
Floating spectral in the moonshine,  
Along the low, black shore !  
Where like snow the gannet's feathers  
On Brador's rocks are shed,  
And the noisy murr are flying  
Like black scuds, overhead ;

" Where in mist the rock is hiding,  
And the sharp reef lurks below,  
And the white squall smites in summer,  
And the autumn tempests blow ;  
Where, through gray and rolling vapour,  
From evening unto morn,  
A thousand boats are hailing,  
Horn answering unto horn."

— "*The Fishermen*," *Whittier*.

THE ancient conundrum anent a door might be paraphrased on the Labrador coast as follows: When is a fish not a fish? When it is a salmon or a halibut or a caplin, or in fact any finny monster except a cod.

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Here the cod is king. He alone is *fish*! I was introduced to this somewhat anomalous use of the English language by overhearing the following conversation: "And what did you get in your net the day, Sandy b'y?" "Only two fish, sorrh, and four salmon."

The permanent inhabitants of the Labrador coast, the "liveyers," are about three thousand in number, while between twenty and thirty thousand fishermen spend the short summer there. These latter figures include fisherwomen and fisherchildren, for they all take part in the business of preparing and curing the fish. As soon as the ice permits, and even before it, the fleet of schooners sails from Newfoundland for the Labrador coast, eager to be on hand when the fish "strike in." Partly to prevent too great recklessness from early sailing in the ice for the desirable points, a definite date is set, before which time it is illegal to put out the fish-traps.

The schooners are loaded with salt for curing the fish, and many of them crowded with people; for, besides their own crew of five or six





Fishermen at Batteau



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men and a woman or girls to cook and help at the splitting tables, the vessels are often burdened with "freighters," — fishermen and their families with no schooners of their own. These people, who are also called "stationers," are landed all along the coast at one of the numerous harbours, and spend the summer in little houses or tilts. They are brought back in the fall and pay for their passage with fish. These, like the liveyers, are more or less fixed, and the fish must come to them, while the fleet of "green fishermen," as they are called, are here to-day and gone to-morrow, always on the alert to be in the thick of the fight, and load their vessels as soon as may be for the return voyage.

The first question that is always asked is not news from the outer world. What matters it to them whether the Russian dynasty is tottering? Their interests are focussed nearer at hand: "How's fish?" "Have they struck in?" "How many kentles (quintals) in the traps?" On our return trip near Ragged Islands, just after we had emerged from the

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ice, we come in sight of a fleet of fifty-four schooners, — green fishermen, — with all sails set going north. A brave showing they make, with dark mountains on their port, and ice on their starboard side. The temptation to learn the all important news from us is too much for some of them, and several deviate from their course to hail us. Seven sturdy vikings row up in a long boat, a coat elevated on an oar as a flag. The captain stops the steamer and calls from the bridge, "What do you want?" The man at the steering oar asks in reply in a stentorian voice: "'Ow's the h'ice, sorrh, down along, and 'ow's the fish, sorrh?" Another long boat rows up and asks for letters for the *Brother and Sister*, of which there are none. I imagine this is but a pretext for the next question which immediately follows: "'Ow's fish, sorrh, down the coast?"

Splendid-looking fellows are most of these fisherfolk, breathing the finest air in the world, eating an abundance of good fish, and taking plenty of exercise. There are no gasoline launches — puff-boats, sea-skunks, or what

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you will — on this coast, to affright the ear, pollute the air, or weaken, by disuse, the muscles of the fishermen. Great sweeps they use, eighteen or twenty feet long, and there can be no better health weights than these. The man in the stern stands up and sculls with an oar which is passed out through a hole, and wonderfully skilful and graceful he is, as with the propeller-like action of the oar he pushes the boat ahead, guiding it to the desired point with a nicety.

There are two things among these fisherfolk that are conspicuous by their absence, and I believe my brief observation would be borne out to a considerable extent by a longer stay. I refer to the absence of drinking and profanity. I saw no drunkenness and heard but little profanity all the time I was on the coast. That these habits are unknown is certainly too much to expect, but they are certainly not prevalent on the Labrador coast.

Although brown eyes and black hair are common, the usual type is the Anglo-Saxon blue-eyed and brown or flaxen-haired mortal



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among these fishermen. Their clothing is bleached by the weather, and so patched that it is often a problem to decide which is original material and which is patch. The trousers are tucked into tall leather boots, sometimes extending above the knee. Blue or red sweaters, or perhaps a ragged brown velveteen jacket with a handkerchief knotted about the neck, cover their upper parts. Old caps or tam-o'-shanters set jauntily over one ear, a lock of hair escaping over the forehead, add to the picturesqueness of their general make-up. Mittens, with a separate place for the index finger, are also commonly worn. In stormy weather and while hauling the nets they wear suits of yellow oilskins and sou'westers to keep out the wet. Some of them I noticed wore bracelets of brass chains to charm away salt water sores.

The boats are so large and stiff that it is a common thing to see all the men in them standing up, whether they are rowing, hauling their nets, or fishing. They run about in the boats in a way that would make a dory fisher-



Visiting Fishing-boats alongside the "Virginia Lake" at Batteau



Fish-stage at Battle Harbour



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man's hair stand on end. Whenever the wind is favourable the fishermen put up a couple of masts with spritsails stained a picturesque brown or red, often using the boat-hook as a sprit, and glide over the waves with the great oar out behind for a rudder. Many a time I was reminded of a picture of vikings as these great fishing-boats swept by in the stormy sea with their freight of hardy fishermen.

The cod generally follow the caplin, but this is not always the case, for at Battle Harbour caplin were abundant, yet "fish" were scarce. Caplin are small fish of about the size and appearance of smelts, and make most excellent bait for cod. They are easily caught in great numbers by lowering a net in which they are drawn up. While fresh they are delicious eating, but they are usually salted and dried, and they are commonly spread on the roofs of the tilts for this purpose. It grieves the careful soul to see so many of these fish wasted, allowed to spoil in the drying, or caught and left in piles to rot, because the fisherman is too lazy to attend to such an ordinary article.

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Early in the season, many splendid salmon are caught in the nets as they swim along the coast to enter the mouths of rivers. These are smoked or salted and packed in tierces to be sent away. The serious business of the summer is, however, the capture of the cod, and for this purpose the trap is chiefly used. This is a large affair of nets. A wall of net called the "leader," anchored at the bottom and held up by cork floats, extends from some rocky point to a square or diamond shaped trap of nets which is held in place in the same way. The fish coming in contact with the "leader" at once turn to swim into deep water, but instead of that find themselves in the trap, from which they are too stupid or frightened to escape. The trap is hauled twice and sometimes thrice a day by the fishermen, who stand up in their boat and pull the net, so that the fish are collected in one side. From this they are ruthlessly scooped up by round hand-nets into the boat. The whole is an interesting process, and there is no more characteristic and picturesque scene on the Labrador



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coast than a boat-load of hardy men standing up in yellow oilskins and hauling the trap in which the fish are frantically flopping. The background is a barren point of rock, lichen-stained and bleak, with a fringe of moaning surf. The fishermen are often to be seen peering down through water telescopes from their boats to see if fish are present.

With their boat-load of fish they row or sail to the schooner or to the fish-stage. Here the fish, the harvest of the sea, are pitched out with a two-pronged fork, as men pitch the harvest of the fields. There are splitting tables on the decks and at the fish-stages, with three or four men or men and women at each table. Number one, "the cut-throater," slits the fish up the belly; number two, "the header," drops the liver into a cask and with a clever pull and cut drags out the remaining entrails and severs the head, dropping them all into the sea; number three, "the splitter," takes out the backbone and drops the now flattened remains into a tub of brine. The last operation is the most delicate and com-

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plicated. Sometimes there are two splitters at a table. When fish are striking in well the work is kept up at night by the aid of flaring tin lamps. It is interesting to see with what skill and precision and with what quickness this work is done. The very small cod are not boned, but are salted whole. These are called "leggies" or "rounders." The salted fish are afterwards dried on "flakes." These are platforms made of small flat planks or of poles, on which the split and flattened fish are spread to dry. In some places the fish are placed on fir boughs, in other places on rocks or on pebbly beaches, and the cobblestone beaches raised high above the tides by recent changes of level on the coast are often utilized for this purpose. These fish-flakes are busy places, for the fish must not "burn," if the sun be too hot, or spoil in the dew and rain. Every evening they are carefully stacked to be spread again on the morrow. In fact a fish-flake and a hay-field have many points of resemblance, although the breath of the one is not as the breath of the other.



Hauling a Trap near Punch Bowl





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I occasionally noticed men "jigging" for cod. The "jigger" consists of a bright piece of lead, shaped somewhat like a small fish, in which two large hooks are imbedded, with their points extending out on either side. The fisherman stands up in the boat and constantly jerks up and down, or "jigs," two lines, to each of which a jigger is attached. The fish are attracted by the lead, and while they are inspecting it are suddenly pierced by the hooks that may enter any part of their anatomy. It is a cruel method, for many fish hooked in the abdomen must tear away before they are brought into the boat. Baited hand lines are also used, and I saw on the southern coast "bultows," or lines to which are attached numerous baited hooks that are set and hauled at stated intervals. These are called trawls on the New England coast.

The fish-stages are lightly constructed wharves of small spruce and fir poles built out from the rocks over the water, which support the rude fish-house, often sheathed with fir boughs and roofed with green turf. In this



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is the splitting table, the casks of livers and brine, and the solidly stacked layers of salted fish.

There is generally a dim religious light in these houses, which seems all the dimmer to one coming in from the broad daylight outside. Light enters only through the low doors and the chinks between the boards or fir branches.

In landing from a boat at a fish-stage, one must generally walk through these fish-houses to reach the shore, and one must take heed of his steps lest he slip and fall on the slimy floor. One must also take heed lest he knock his head at the entrance, for it is a curious habit of Labradorian architects, derived no doubt from the Eskimos, to make low doors. Even the best houses have low doors, as I first found out to my cost at Battle Harbour. The door of my bedroom there was only five feet seven and one-half inches high, and the height of the front door was scarcely more. The consequence was a sore head until I learned to go about with a chronic stoop.



Sod Hut at Houlton



Hut Made Out of an Old Boat at Long Tickle



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The houses or tilts of the fishermen ashore, the "freighters" or "stationers," vary in character as do the houses of the liveyers. Like the houses of the latter, they are generally rough structures, square in shape, built of poles or planks, covered with green or flowering sods. The freighters often bring birch bark from Newfoundland, with which the frame is spread before the sods are applied. In several places I noticed old boats or halves of boats with doors cut in the sides or end, and roofed and sodded so that they made domiciles for the fishermen. At other times the houses were neat frame structures, even clapboarded, and painted white.

This is the case generally on the southern coast. The houses grow simpler and poorer as one goes north. All alike, the inferior and the superior houses, have simple board partitions between the rooms, if perchance there is more than one room. No plaster is used, but the boards are often covered with newspaper or sometimes with real wallpaper. Some of the simplest and poorest houses

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were immaculately clean, others were quite the opposite. They varied as human nature varies, and depended of course on the habits of the man or woman in charge.



## CHAPTER VI

### ICEBERGS AND THE FLOE

"I long to see those icebergs vast,  
With heads all crowned with snow;  
Whose green roots sleep in the awful deep, —  
Two hundred fathoms low."  
— "*The Northern Seas*," *William Howitt*.

PERHAPS the most interesting pictures retained in the memory of this Labrador trip are of the icebergs. We first encountered them in the Straits of Belle Isle, and from there north we were rarely out of sight of one or more of them. In size they varied from tiny cakes of ice to great masses as large as a cathedral. When it is remembered that only about one-sixth part of the berg or even less is above water, one can only wonder at, much less estimate, their great bulk. The small bergs are largely floe-bergs, that is, remnants of the ice floe or pack that formed over the surface of the water during the winter. Some

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are "calves" or fragments split off from the true icebergs, which were themselves broken off from the glaciers of Greenland as they debouched into the sea. Borne along by the arctic currents from the glaciers, many icebergs were stranded in the shallow water of the Labrador coast, while others slowly drifted by outside.

The colour of these bergs first calls for our admiration. Of alabaster whiteness, and sparkling in the sun as if beset with diamonds, they are objects of exceeding beauty. In the shadows, in the deep crevasses, and in the caverns carved by the hungry waves, the colour is often of the most intense and translucent blue. Where the water washes them, and they extend out as great subaqueous shelves, the colour changes to a lovely green. These greens and blues are as delicate and exquisite when seen close at hand as when viewed from a distance. At times there is a faint suspicion of green throughout the whole berg. In the changing lights and shadows of sunrise and sunset the icebergs glow with pink,



Iceberg

Photograph by Dr. W. P. Boiles



## ICEBERGS AND THE FLOE

or darken with purples and blues in a wonderful manner. Beautiful as these colours are, perhaps the most beautiful and impressive of all is the pure, chaste whiteness of these ice mountains of the sea.

In shape the icebergs vary greatly. Some are of simple design. One stranded near Battle Harbour was a great rectangular block, an acre or more in extent, and higher above water than the topmasts of the fishing-schooners. Its sides were everywhere precipitous. Its surface was flat and unbroken save by a few large cracks or crevasses. Another, nearer at hand, almost blocking the harbour's mouth, looked from certain points of view for all the world like a great contented hobby-horse. The head was perfect. The back, however, tapered off as perhaps a sea-horse's back should do, into more of a flipper than a tail. One further off looked like a schooner under full sail.

The steamer passed one that was shaped into a complete arch, under which the waves rushed with an echoing sound. Another consisted of three perpendicular shafts of alabaster



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whiteness, rising from a great subaqueous shelf of a clear green colour. These columns were some sixty feet in height. The pranks that the mirage, so common about the bergs and the floe ice, sometimes played was well illustrated here. As we steamed away from the berg we tried to estimate the height of the columns, comparing them with the height of the masts of a schooner some distance ahead. Every time we looked back the snowy columns looked mightier, at last assuming stupendous proportions, beside which the schooner's masts would have appeared like tenpins. The mirage was drawing them out into the clouds above.

At times we heard a sound like that of a volley of artillery, or the rolling of thunder, caused by the cracking off of a great fragment or calf. Once or twice we witnessed the actual process of calving, and were reminded of Kipling's poem where he says:

"The unstable mined berg going South and the  
Calvings and groans that declare it."

If the calf is large, the centre of gravity of the mother berg changes, and she rolls from



**Iceberg**  
Photograph by Dr. W. P. Bolles



## ICEBERGS AND THE FLOE

side to side before coming to rest in the new position. The blue grottos worn by the waves rise above the water on one side, while the other side sinks. Many of the icebergs showed these raised beaches and caverns, and sometimes a second set, due to a subsequent shifting of the centre of gravity.

The larger icebergs were often accompanied by a large family of calves, that streamed off to leeward, or silently departed against the wind, drawn by a stronger current below. So much more of the berg is below water than above that the currents of water often overcome the more apparent current of air. The tides on the Labrador coast are only about three or four feet in height, but the tidal currents are often very strong.

The dashing of the surf against the sloping shores, precipitous headlands, and deep caverns of the icebergs add to the beauty and wonder of the scene, while the waves produced by the fall of a fragment are at times of considerable magnitude.

The fantastic shapes taken by some of the

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smaller bergs and pieces of floe ice are innumerable. I made rough drawings of many in my note-book. The huge toadstool is a common type. This shape is due to the washing of the water, — the slop of the waves, — which gradually cuts a deep groove around the base of the berg at the water-level. Deeper and deeper it cuts until there is nothing but a shelf of green ice with its surface awash and an upright blue column supporting another shelf or cone-shaped mass of white, sparkling ice. Some of these toadstools are twenty feet high. By the cracking away of part of the base, the centre of gravity may change so that an arch is formed over the water. The large arches, of which we saw one splendid example, must, however, be caused by the falling away and washing out of great fragments of ice, and by the hollowing action of the waves. One ice-berg we passed had a turret about sixty feet high that was shaped like the head of a griffin, and the illusion was increased by a hole which gave the appearance of an eye.

Several times we passed bergs that looked



## ICEBERGS AND THE FLOE

like great birds with expansive tails, floating in the water, or sitting on ledges of ice. One could even distinguish a turkey-cock from a duck among these ice forms. One piece of ice looked like a huge squab with its wings flopped out, and another was a very fine enlargement of the *America's* cup. Again the ice took the form of seals or dolphins or delicate branching stags' horns, and again of bizarre forms that are not to be found in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.

The dangers of the subaqueous extension of the ice from the bergs were well shown by an accident that took place about this very time. A schooner, the *Stella B.*, was scudding along with a good wind in the Straits of Belle Isle, — Isle au Diable was the original and more appropriate name. Suddenly a giant iceberg loomed close at hand. The helm was put over, and then the captain cried "Steady," thinking the vessel was well out of the way of danger. In an instant she crashed on to an unseen reef of ice, extending out from the berg. The

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schooner slipped off and began at once to fill. They had barely time to take to the jolly-boat, eight souls in all, including the captain's two young daughters, sixteen and nineteen years old. The schooner sank before their eyes, and for thirty hours the jolly-boat battled with the wind and waves.

Once they took refuge in the lee of another iceberg, but that began to crack and they backed away just in time to escape being swamped by the capsizing berg. The girls never murmured. One faint-hearted sailor declared it was of no use, he would row no longer; and the girls upbraided him as a coward and said they would bail as long as the men would row. All this I had from the mate of the shipwrecked vessel. No wonder the sailors dread the ice-islands, as they call them. The danger of collision is much increased by the fact that fog—the treacherous and deceptive fog—so often hangs about and shrouds the icebergs.

On our way north we first met the floe ice outside of Long Tickle on July 20th, and the



The "Virginia Lake" Steaming through the Floe Ice at Double Island



## ICEBERGS AND THE FLOE

next day we pushed through half a mile of it at Double Island, between Hopedale and Nain, to bear the mails to that island. Inside the harbour a group of men had run out on to the ice to receive the mail-boat. Their hands were tied by the ice. Their schooner was imprisoned behind great masses of it, and they dared not set their traps for fish lest they should be carried away by the drifting floe.

As we again steamed north over the smooth water, we realized that this same pack ice was responsible for the absence of a ground swell. Outside was a continuous wall of ice floe, cutting off the force of the waves. The mirage or ice blink here played pranks, for the ice floe was magnified into a great wall of ice apparently over a hundred feet high and stretching as far as the eye could see. It looked exactly like the pictures of the great barrier-ice wall of the antarctic regions.

Two days later, on our return, we again gave battle to the ice floe for most of the day. It was an interesting experience. The ice ahead as far as we could see was broken up into great



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cakes and miniature bergs, with channels and pools of blue water. The *Virginia Lake* is, however, accustomed to such experiences. She goes sealing every spring. Forward she is sheathed outside with heavy planking, and reinforced with great plates of iron. Slowly she steamed along, threading her way, where no way seemed possible, under the skilful guidance of the captain who quietly gave his orders from the bridge. At times the good steamer was brought to a full stop by the impact of the ice, and groaned and quivered in every timber. Again she slid up on a subaqueous shelf of solid ice of unknown depth, her bow rising, her stern sinking. Usually, however, by skilful manœuvring, she poked her nose between the bergs, pushing them slowly to one side. It was fascinating to look down from the bow on these green and blue and white masses. Some of the floes were of large extent, and contained beautiful green basins which suggested crystal bath-tubs for the sea-nymphs. So clear is the water on this Labrador coast that one can see the ice of some of the larger bergs extending



The Ice at Long Tickle



The Ice at Ragged Harbour



## ICEBERGS AND THE FLOE

many fathoms down. At times we emerged into considerable lakes of open water. Here for a few minutes we went ahead at full speed.

While we were steaming through the floe ice, we saw but few birds. A black guillemot swam here and there in the openings of water. His red feet, which showed as he dove, and his black plumage contrasted well with the green of the ice. At times the contrast was still more marked as he sat on a small berg. We counted thirty of them while we were going through this floe. Kittiwakes seem especially at home in the ice, and a group of them on a small cake, or a large flock on an iceberg, were often seen.

Although the glaucous or burgomaster gull is famed for the whiteness of its plumage, it does not equal in purity the colour of the ice. We saw several that morning. Splendid great fellows they are, almost as large as great black-backed gulls. Their wings are pure white, and lack the black markings present on the large feathers of the herring gull's wings. The adults are of a pearl or bluish gray colour on the back,

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while the immature bird lacks this blue mantle as it is called, and is of a uniform cream or buffy white. Owing to this difference in plumage, they were at one time thought to be a different species and were named the Hutchins gull.

Another bird whose black and white plumage makes it always conspicuous is the eider-duck. Several small bands of these birds threaded their way in flight among the floes.

It was with feelings of regret, not shared, it is safe to say, by the captain, that we emerged from our icy fetters, and proceeded swiftly on our way south over the unimpeded waters.



## CHAPTER VII

### HOPEDALE AND NAIN, THE MORAVIANS AND THE ESKIMOS

"The Esquimaux from Ice and Snow now free,  
In Shallops and in Whale-boats go to Sea ;  
In Peace they rove along this pleasant shore,  
In plenty live ; nor do they wish for more.  
Thrice happy Race! Strong Drink nor gold they know ;  
What in their Hearts they think, their Faces shew.  
Of manners gentle, in their dealings just,  
Their plighted promise, safely you may trust."

— *Cartwright's Journal.*

THE *Virginia Lake* steams into the land-locked bay of Hopedale at seven in the morning of July 21, 1906. It is a beautiful day. The glass stands at 49°. A gentle westerly wind ruffles the surface of the water. Burgomaster gulls, scoters, and eider-ducks fly about, disturbed by our appearance. The distant mountains are of a delicate blue colour, while the nearer hills, for the most part sombre with their lichen covering, are patched here with the

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delicate olive and pea greens of the arctic vegetation, and there with white drifts of snow left from the winter's storms.

Close to the water's edge are several large buildings, neatly painted white with red roofs, and among them a small church. These are the buildings of the Moravian missionaries. Close to these buildings and in marked contrast with them are the crowded huts and hovels of an Eskimo village. On a point of rocks are grouped a number of Eskimos, men, women, and children, watching our steamer, their bright clothing contrasting well with the gray rocks. Others rush to their boats, and we are soon surrounded by a grinning, chattering crowd. *Aksunae!* they call, and we reply, some of us using for the first time the Eskimo tongue. *Aksunae*, the literal meaning of which is *be strong*, is used as a salutation like our *good morning*. Our first visit on shore is to the Moravian brethren, who receive us pleasantly, and courteously invite us into the large house. I had expected to find aged, black-robed men, speaking only the German language, but am

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agreeably surprised to find the Moravians both at Hopedale and Nain to be young or middle-aged, wide-awake men, wearing the ordinary dress and speaking English perfectly, although their names suggest a German descent. I shall remember with great pleasure the kind reception that they and their charming wives give us during the brief time that we are ashore at these two mission places. Even in scenes like this I have my eyes open for birds, and I am so fortunate as to obtain a few bird-skins from an Eskimo, and a number of others, including those of a gyrfalcon, harlequin ducks, and an ivory gull from the Moravians. These skins have all been procured by them from the Eskimos, who make what is technically called a bird "skin," in the same way that bird-skins are prepared for scientific collections. Why they do this I do not know, unless they have been instructed or it be for ornament. Most of the skins have strings tied to the bills so that they can be hung up. The skins of sea-birds are generally thick with fat, but the Eskimos remove this skilfully with the teeth,

## ALONG THE LABRADOR COAST

sucking in the oil. When I return to the ship I board her triumphantly with my arms full of bird-skins.

After we have visited the Moravians we hurriedly make an inspection of the Eskimo village. Some two dozen huts are tumbled in together, and a narrow winding street leads up through the centre. Eskimos of both sexes and all ages are everywhere, and dogs galore, for each family has from seven to nine dogs. Komatiks or dog sledges are lying about, while kayaks, the Eskimo hunting-boats, hang against the sides of some of the buildings. On our return we see a native navigating one of these boats here. Dark red seal meat and fish are drying on poles, and steel traps lie above on the roofs of some of the dwellings. A pair of robins are perfectly at home here, and have built their nest, I am told, on one of the houses, while white-crowned sparrows are singing from the roof, and a noisy pair of ringneck plovers are whistling on the shore.

The Eskimos are all smiling and are very ready to invite us into their houses and to pose



**Eskimo in Kayak**



**Hopedale**

Photograph by Dr. W. P. Bolles





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for photographs. The houses are all small, one-room affairs, nearly square, and made of logs or of rough boards and poles, the roofs generally covered with green sods. Each house has a low, dark vestibule, suggestive of the architecture of the snow dwellings. Cleanliness in and about the houses is not of the highest order.

All too soon we are called away, for, if the steamer is to reach Nain, she must not delay. One of the Moravian brethren accompanies us on the trip to Nain for a short visit to his friends there, as this is the first time this summer that the *Virginia Lake* has attempted to reach that point. He is a striking figure dressed in a fine long coat of silvery sealskins, and he wears a beautiful pair of skin boots, white in the foot, black in the leg, with a band of fur at the top.

Leaving Hopedale, the steamer passes some interesting basaltic hills, the Black Heads, which rise steeply from the water. As we steam along in the quiet water, sheltered by the outlying islands and the floe ice, over which lies the treacherous fog, while inland all is bright

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and sunny, a small whale jumps clear of the water five times in quick succession, turning partly over so as to show his pinkish white belly. My friend at once recognizes him as a pike-headed whale by his white wrist mark, and calls my attention to this diagnostic point. The whale strikes the water each time with a great splash. A little later we see the long sabre-like fin of a killer whale. Our experience in passing through the floe ice on our way to Double Island, and our longer struggle on the return, I have already related in the chapter on the ice. At one place where the ice is packed in between rocky islands the mirage produces the strange effect of great white cataracts pouring off rocky cliffs.

As we approach Fanny's Harbour, where two men are said to have fought for a girl of that name, the sky-line of the hills is beset with boulders left by the glaciers. The whole effect of these hills is gray and black from their lichen covering, while only here and there are faint greenish-yellow patches of mosses and arctic vegetation. Snow lies in the gullies down to

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the water's edge. The bases of the hills, where they are washed by the sea, are naked even of lichen and show the natural salmon pink colour of the syenite or gneiss, set off by the white line of surf. Here the student of the Indians leaves us with his canoe and baggage, to join some of his Nascopi friends in order to study their habits and their language, which he has been doing for some years. It is impossible for the Labradormen to understand his object, and they all suspect that he is looking for "*with* in the rocks," or in other words for gold, and they feel sure that his talk about studying the Indians is merely a ruse! No man in his senses would come so far to study such an insignificant subject as the Indian! In fact, here, as almost everywhere in this new world, it is impossible for men to think of anything except in terms of dollars and cents. Nothing else can be worth while. I was asked pointblank whether I myself was not in reality prospecting for gold, and whether in my hurried dashes ashore filthy lucre, and not birds, was really uppermost in my mind, for what possible ob-

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ject could there be in looking at dicky-birds, or even in shooting them except for sport? Possibly I was going to make money by selling their skins. When I came on board with specimens of lichens collected for my botanical friend, the knowing ones put their heads together and said I was gathering valuable medicines! It is certainly a great luxury to study something which is of no immediate "practical" value and which has "no money in it!"

In the afternoon we pass a high rocky island, — the word rocky is almost superfluous, for all islands and land is rocky here, — around which fly some forty razor-billed auks, or tinkers, their little black wings moving with great rapidity. This same afternoon we count, besides these, twelve of the large loons, three red-throated loons, one hundred and sixty-five black guillemots, four glaucous gulls, one great black-backed gull, six herring gulls, one hundred and two kittiwakes, two Pomarine jaegers, thirty-two Greenland eider-ducks, one king eider-duck, and sixty white-winged scoter-ducks.





**Nain**

Photograph by Dr. W. P. Bolles



## HOPEDALE AND NAIN

The jaegers, or hunters of the sea, called here "bo'swains," are very graceful, hawk-like gulls. At times on our voyage they have been very abundant, — both the Pomarine and parasitic species, — and we have seen a number in the black phase with plumage as black as that of a crow. They derive their name of hunter from their habit of chasing gulls and terns to despoil them of their prey, preferring to make their living in this piratical manner rather than by honest labour.

Late that afternoon we pass islands where there is some gravel which looks like glacial drift, into which streams are cutting deeply. This is the first gravel we have seen on this eastern coast of Labrador. There are some splendid examples of raised beaches here, and there is plenty of snow on the hillsides. As we pass the point of Paul's or Powell's Island, which forms the entrance to the long fiord leading to Nain, we notice a tent, some rude tilts, and a few Eskimos wandering about in white sacks.

The fiord leading to Nain is twenty miles

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long, and is flanked in many places by great sombre gray cliffs and steep mountains. The fiord twists so that we seem to be continually in a narrow mountain lake, from which retreat is impossible. Behind are great cliffs which shut us out from the sea. Ahead are tumbled mountains and steep precipices all bathed in a wonderful sunset light. One is prone to think the last sunset always the best and most wonderful, but I am sure I have never seen such a succession of glorious sunsets as I have witnessed in these boreal regions, and I shall never forget this one as we steam through the narrow fiord to Nain.

The sun does not disappear until half-past eight, and at nine-thirty, while it is still broad daylight, the *Virginia Lake* drops anchor for the first time this year in the quiet little harbour, the mountain tarn of Nain. A cannon is fired by the Eskimos on the shore, and the sound reverberates among the mountains, while the steamer whistles in reply. Cries of welcome are heard, and the Eskimos rush down to the wharf to greet us. We are soon surrounded by



Nain. Eskimo Village. The "Virginia Lake" at Anchor

Photograph by Dr. W. P. Bolles





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boats crowded with brightly dressed natives. All are smiling to the fullest possible extent and shouting *aksunae*. The scene is novel and most interesting. On the north shore, with a background of forest, behind which rises a peaked mountain, are the mission buildings of the Moravian brethren, all painted white and with red roofs. Close to the largest house is the chapel. To the right of these buildings is a village of low, dirty Eskimo huts, all tumbled in together.

We crowd the mail-boat, sailors, officers, and passengers, and are soon ashore, where we are kindly greeted by the Moravian brothers and sisters, who introduce us to their bishop who happens to be staying there. Under the guidance of a Moravian, who acts as an interpreter, we wander about the Eskimo settlement, which has the same characteristics as that at Hopedale. The mission house and chapel are courteously shown to us by Brother Schmitt and his hospitable wife, who have been here fifteen years. Everything is spotless. In the chapel there are benches for the Eskimos

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to sit on, the men at one end, the women at the other.

On one side is a raised platform where there is a reading-desk on a table, while opposite to it is a harmonium on another platform. There are chandeliers for candles. In the mission house I copy some interesting records of birds and their eggs which Brother Schmitt has kept for some years.

We are back on the ship at half-past ten, and find the dining-saloon crowded with Eskimos, twenty-six in all, men and women, and one child. They all have broad flat faces, ranging in colour from swarthy brown to yellow. Their eyes are black and set somewhat obliquely, close together. The men wear their straight jet-black hair banged over their foreheads, and cut square at the back of their necks, very much as the boy of five has his hair treated at home. This gives them a delightfully innocent and childlike appearance. The black hair of the women is neatly arranged in little braids about the head. Some of the older men have a scanty growth of hair on the upper lip



Joel Joseph on Board the Steamer at Long Tickle





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and chin. Their mouths are large, their teeth fine.

As to clothing, this is various, but generally picturesque. Thick white cloth sacks or *sillapaks* are commonly worn by both men and women. Some of the women's have tails in front or behind. The sacks are trimmed with black and red braid. One man wears a seal-skin *sillapak*. Bright-coloured handkerchiefs about the neck or on the head are common, and the men seem to be fond of embroidered vests. The trousers and skirts are patched and faded to neutral tints. Skin boots, the odour of which is characteristic, complete the costume. All are laughing and chattering in their native language, for only one man in the crowd speaks English, and I have a good opportunity to air my small vocabulary of Eskimo words I have learned from the Moravian brother. *Aksunae* or "Good day" is the most generally useful; *Nakomik* means "Thank you;" *Ananak*, "It's fine;" *Kanoëket?* "How are you?" *Kujana*, "I don't care," or "What difference does it make?" and the expressive *Ahchuck* means

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"I don't know." *Etukiarita*, the Moravian brother explained, can only be translated by the English expression, "Well, I'll be blow'd."

The Eskimos soon begin to sing, for music is one of their chief pleasures and accomplishments. Here at Nain, as at all the missions, violins are used by them in the church choir, and brass bands are organized. A good story is told of their welcoming some Indians with this latter music. The Indians were so terrified, thinking perhaps that the Iroquois devils were loose again, that it was some time before they could be persuaded to approach. At all the missions the Moravians encourage this latent taste for music, and find it of great value in attracting the Eskimos to the church service.

For over an hour these natives sing to us, — familiar music with Eskimo words, — "Rock of Ages," "Shall We Gather at the River?" "Holy Night," interspersed with what I take to be secular songs from the laughter that follows. Their voices are most harmonious, and the singing is indeed of a superior order. I enjoy particularly the part songs, and one

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cannot but be affected by the strange scene and the beauty and sweetness of the singing. "*Nakomik*" we cry, and "*Ananak*," and return the compliment in the only way we can with a graphophone. It is indeed a terrible come-down to "The Old Apple-tree" and "Everybody Works but Father," but the Eskimos seem to enjoy it, and greet the songs and their explanation by the interpreter with peals of laughter. A song in which a man beats his wife seems especially to amuse them. A Moravian brother told me that they had been unable to wean the Eskimo from the wife-beating habit. Even the wives resented any interference on this score. An Irish jig makes them shake with joy, and I am sure they would dance were there room to stir.

How different is the nature of the Eskimo from that of the Indian! The one cheerful, happy, loquacious, the other sombre, gloomy, and silent. Of course, these characteristics are not always so distinct, but they were marked in the specimens of the two races I met on the Labrador coast.

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Soon after midnight the good-natured, laughing crowd tumble into their boats and row ashore. All is peaceful in this little mountain lake, in which the great sea-going steamer seems strangely out of place, for there is no suggestion of sea here. The light is dim, but sufficient to outline the surrounding hills and mountains, the substantial buildings of the Moravians and the squalid huts of the Eskimos. Overhead a few stars are visible, while a single ray of the aurora borealis shoots across the zenith. As the pleasant voices of the Eskimos are borne to my ears from the shore I think of the very different reception this same race gave the first Moravians, who over 150 years ago first came to these shores to labour in their behalf. "Treacherous, murderous savages" they were then, God-fearing, useful members of society they are now.

In 1741 the "Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel amongst the Heathen" was formed by members of the Moravian Church in London, and missionaries were sent to Christianize the Eskimos in Greenland. In 1752 the schooner





Eskimos at Hopedale



Eskimos at Nain

Photograph by Dr. W. P. Bolles





## HOPEDALE AND NAIN

*Hope* sailed with a devoted band of Moravians for the Labrador coast. At Hopedale they erected a dwelling-house and some of them prepared to stay there. Treachery developed among the Eskimos and seven of the ship's company were murdered. The surviving missionaries returned to England. After an interval of nineteen years a further attempt was made by the Moravians to reach the Labrador Eskimos, and a permanent settlement was established in Nain in 1771. Later missions were established at Okak, Hopedale, Hebron, Zoar, Ramah, Makkovik, and Killinek. Makkovik, established in 1898, is the most southern of the Moravian missions on the Labrador coast, at latitude 55°, a short distance to the north of Hamilton Inlet. Killinek, the most northern of the missions, near latitude 60° and close to Cape Chidley, has been only recently established.

At each missionary station are the missionaries and their wives, who are called the brothers and sisters; also the unmarried brethren, all labouring together to Christianize and

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civilize the Eskimos. Only the younger children of the missionaries are allowed to stay in Labrador, for at seven years of age they must be separated from their parents, who may never see them again, to be sent to Europe to be educated. Some of them return in later years as missionaries. The link with Europe is supplied by the Society's ship, now and for many years, but not always, called the *Harmony*. For over 130 years the ship has been making annual visits to this dangerous coast. During all this time only three vessels have been lost, but they have had many hair-breadth escapes in great storms and ice blockades and in times of war.

Many of the facts about the Moravian missions I gleaned from an interesting work on the subject purchased at Nain. It is written by one of the brethren, the Rev. J. W. Davey, and is called "The Fall of Torngak." Torngak, which is pronounced like cognac, is the name of one of the Eskimo gods or devils, and the Moravians' mission it is to oust this Torngak and substitute the God of the Christians. In

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this connection it is interesting to read Fridtjof Nansen's book on the Eskimos. He is a great believer in the virtues of the original Eskimos, uncontaminated by the influence of whites. He finds them unselfish and altruistic, abounding in truly Christian virtues, although some of their ideas of morality differ radically, he admits, from that of the so-called civilized world. The missionaries, by breaking up their natural life, which the exigencies of the chase on sea and land require, make them, he claims, dependent on imported luxuries and necessities, and less able to fight the severe fight in the arctic regions. In this way they are degenerating in stamina and slowly succumbing to the inevitable, — disappearing as a race.

That there is much truth in this, there can be no doubt, but it must be said that the degeneration would be more rapid and more vicious in contact with the white traders and fishermen. Better by far the heathen Torngak than the white devil Cognac and all its accompanying satellites! Alas that this primitive people with their wonderful adaptations to

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life in the far north, with their houses, their clothing, their weapons, and their boats, evolved out of long centuries of conflict with the elements to a state of utmost perfection, should not have been allowed to lead their own lives! It could not be. Contact with the rude explorers and traders, who treated them as slaves, to do with them as they chose, necessarily developed the worst side of their character, and their fate as a race on the Labrador coast would long ago have been sealed, had it not been for these Moravians, who by kindness and long-suffering, and by privations unnumbered, made them the happy, peaceful, God-fearing people we have just seen.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ESKIMO DOG

"The Esquimaux dog is surly and obstinate, because his treatment is such as not to develop the nobler parts of his moral nature: he is a slave, ever toiling and hardly used; subjected to want and blows, to cold and extreme fatigue; seldom, except perhaps by way of excitement in the chase, does he receive a kind word of thankful encouragement; unless indeed from the women, by whom he is uniformly better treated than by the men: it is from the women that this poor animal receives care and attention when sick or helpless, and the consequence is that the women have the complete ascendancy over his affection, and their words can prevail when the blows and threatenings of the men only excite obstinate disobedience; but let the voice of a female issue the orders, and obedience is promptly and willingly rendered."

— "*History of the Dog*," 1845, *W. C. L. Martin*.

"His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,  
Showed he was nane o' Scotland's dogs,  
But whalpit some place far abroad,  
Where sailors gang to fish for cod."

— "*The Twa Dogs*," *Burns*.

ONE of the most interesting studies on the Labrador coast is the Eskimo dog or husky.<sup>1</sup> I first awoke to his importance and

<sup>1</sup> The term "husky" is also used for Eskimo.

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prominence in the life of the people during my stay at Battle Harbour on the way north. The Eskimo dog is a handsome wolf, a great shaggy beast, gray or white, or mottled white and black. At times he assumes a tawny yellowish hue. About his shoulders the hair is, especially long and shaggy. His nose is pointed and rather short, his tail bushy and curved forward so that it touches his back. In size he is larger than a large shepherd dog.

I was told that I should hear the Battle Harbour band. I shall never forget it. I have never heard wolves howl, but I can easily believe that their howl and that of the huskies is alike. I did not hear a true Eskimo dog bark. The first night at Battle Harbour I lay awake for some time listening with great enjoyment to the "band." A few dogs outside my window began to howl low and softly. The volume of sound swelled till it became like the rushing of a mighty wind, — wild, fear-inspiring. Again it died away, only to come again with the deep tones of an organ. Immediately the refrain was taken up by a group of dogs



Eskimo Half-breeds at Long Tickle



## THE ESKIMO DOG

at the next house, and again by those farther on, until the great chorus stretched throughout the whole village. Then all was silent. Anon it began again at some distant outpost and passed from group to group. At Nain there are sometimes three hundred of these dogs in winter, and their nocturnal concerts are said to be most imposing. Some day an Eskimo — and they are a musical race — will compose an opera, and the howling of the dogs will form the *motif*.

The Eskimo dog has taken but a slight step in his evolution from the wolf to man's closest companion among the lower animals. Yet but little seems to be needed to make him as thoroughly canine — I was about to say human — as the best and most affectionate of our dogs. Huge fellows they are, wolf-like in appearance and habits, taught by the iron heel and cruel lash of their masters, with rarely a word of kindness. No wonder they are fierce! The Century Dictionary gives the following quotation about the husky: "The original *Husky* has always been an animal requiring firm



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treatment, naturally dangerous and to a great extent devoid of affection."

I was repeatedly told never to attempt to pat these dogs, or show any kindness towards them, as they did not understand, could not understand, such actions, being but half-tamed wolves, and that I might be attacked for my pains. Stories are told of their wolfish deeds. A few years ago a child that we saw at Cartwright fell down and was at once set upon by the pack. His mother rushed out and by heroic efforts rescued him, horribly injured though he was. He was carried many miles to Doctor Grenfell, and recovered miraculously. He had received fifty-three wounds. Only last winter a man from Battle Harbour failed to return from a sledge journey. His terribly mutilated body was found. The dogs had literally torn him to pieces. Farther north, the same winter, an aged couple underwent the same fate. If any one falls down among a pack of dogs, there is great danger of the animals turning on him, especially if they have been fighting among themselves. It is thought that

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some of these accidents have happened in this way, although in other cases the victims may have previously been frozen to death. After a dog has once bitten a man he must be killed. The taste for human flesh once acquired can only be eradicated by death. Yet I often saw children playing fearlessly among the great brutes, tumbling down and crawling among them, and I saw one towhead sitting beside an enormous wolf-like creature and placidly pounding his toes with a stone. The dog behaved like any well-regulated Christian dog under the circumstances, and bore it like a martyr.

At Battle Harbour I was introduced to two splendid Eskimo dogs, living examples of the effects of kindness. They had always been treated kindly and well fed. One had been a famous leader on Doctor Grenfell's dog sledge. They could be as safely fondled as any of our most civilized dogs. It required considerable courage at first to allow them to lay their great noses in one's lap, and to pet and fondle them, but I eventually lost all fear of them and once found myself walking along with my hand in

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the mouth of one of them. This difference in nature was apparently largely in management. The masters of these friends of mine had respected them, treated them with uniform kindness both in action and in supplying them with food. The lash was used but little and only when it was needed.

The average dog-owner, as far as I could learn, was constantly and unnecessarily maltreating his dogs. At a liveyer's house I was about to sit on a bench, but hesitated because an Eskimo dog was stretched beneath. The liveyer, a kind and devoted father, kicked the dog out of the way with such severity that he howled with pain. Dogs in the way are invariably kicked, or great stones thrown at them. The dogs' fear of stones I learned in a rather amusing manner. I had been wandering along the shore at Long Tickle, where we were storm-bound for a day, watching birds. Taking down my binoculars after a longer scrutiny than usual, I found, much to my dismay, that I was nearly surrounded by six or seven Eskimo dogs. There were no houses in sight, and no one to





Eskimo Dogs at Long Tickle



A Mountain Tarn near White Bear Bay





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whom I could call. I retreated in as dignified a manner as possible, endeavouring to keep up a menacing front, and requesting the dogs to go home. They evidently did not understand English, and I had not then learned any Eskimo words. They followed me altogether too closely for comfort. I accidentally dropped a pocket-compass I was holding in my hand. Should I stoop down to pick it up? I remembered the warning always to stand up among these dogs, never to fall by any chance. If I stooped, they might think I was falling and be on me in an instant. However, I did not wish to abandon the compass, so fixing my eyes on them with all the fierceness I could muster, I stooped. The effect was magical. The beasts fled, nor stopped to look behind them. Over the hills they went, and I saw them no more. It was comical! Alone on these barren hills, wind-swept and fog-wrapped, I laughed aloud, and understood that in future, whenever Eskimo dogs appeared threatening, all I had to do was to stoop down as if to pick up a stone to throw at them.

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However, my knowledge of Eskimo dogs is limited to a very brief season in summer. In winter the brutes are hard worked and scantily fed. Often for days they go hungry, and they must needs desire at times to forage for themselves. In summer, it is true, they are not fed at all, but food is plenty, and there is no need of their attacking human beings. In the sealing season, refuse from this source is abundant. During the fishing season, cods' heads and entrails line the harbours, and are to be had for the picking. Caplins and larger fish are often thrown up or cast themselves on the shore in great numbers.

But there is another source of food supply for the dogs during the spring and early summer, one that I studied with considerable interest, and I am convinced that the dogs are a cause of much injury. It is natural that these dogs, foraging for a living, should explore great regions of the coast for food, and judging by their tracks and signs this was the case, not only on the immediate shore, but some distance back from it. Dogs were not infrequently to

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be seen in these out-of-the-way parts. What chance, then, have the eggs and young of an eider-duck or even a pipit under these circumstances? The manner in which pipits and spotted sandpipers flew anxiously about when dogs appeared on the scene seemed to point to the truth of this theory. I have seen them fly at the dogs fiercely, almost hitting them in their desire to drive off the intruders. In going ashore from the steamer for a hasty reconnaissance of the bird inhabitants, I soon learned to expect a dearth of ground-nesting birds if Eskimo dogs were plenty, while at fishing stations where there were no liveyers, and consequently no dogs, I could count on finding these birds near at hand.

For this reason I am an advocate of the substitution of the reindeer for the Eskimo dog, although it hardly seems possible that this can be brought about. All the dogs must first be killed. The two animals cannot exist together. The dogs would eat the reindeer. The difficulties of substitution of the reindeer for the dog suggest the old problem of erecting

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a new prison on the site of the old without freeing the prisoners. The Eskimo and the liveyer have for generations depended on their dogs, and know their value in many a fierce winter's struggle. They can hardly be expected to burn their bridges behind them, and embark on what appears to them to be a doubtful experiment.

The arguments for the reindeer are many. In the first place it does not bite. It will not eat the domestic hen or pig, goat or cow, as does the dog. It gives milk, skin for clothing, flesh for food, and above all it can subsist even in winter by its own efforts, living on reindeer lichen. Whether this supply on the coast will prove adequate seems a serious question. But I do not pretend to discuss the great problem. Simply from a bird-lover's point of view the Eskimo dog should go. However, he is a fine brute and I am glad I have made his acquaintance.

I saw several litters of puppies, and fat roly-poly little creatures they were, albeit rather unsatisfactory to one who wished to fondle



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them in the manner such tempting little puppies should be fondled. Attempts to approach them produced menacing attitudes on their parts, and speedy retreats to some cavern under a rock or tilt. Furthermore, — and this was still more discouraging, — the hair on their mother's back had a way of erecting itself at these times.

Of dog sledges or komatiks I can speak only from what I saw of them during this brief summer vacation. They were lying about at every liveyer settlement and Eskimo village along the coast, waiting for the long winter. I once heard Doctor Grenfell say that he had tried many winter sports, but that none of them equalled the great sport of driving a dog team. The komatiks are long, low wooden sleds, plain, ordinary-looking affairs. The top boards are secured with thongs, as no nails will resist the strain and wracking to which they are subjected. The runners are of iron or of strips of bone cut from a whale's jaws. The bone runners are preferred when the snow is soft and melting. I obtained from an Eskimo



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a good model of a komatik with its team of Eskimo dogs all carved out of wood. Each dog's tail curved over its back made a perfect ring.

## CHAPTER IX

### CAPE CHARLES AND CAPTAIN CARTWRIGHT

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness."

— "*The Task*," *Cowper*.

HAVING failed to make connections by some paltry two hours with the *Home* going south, we were obliged to spend a week at Battle Harbour, instead of on the Southern Labrador coast as we had intended, but a most profitable and enjoyable week it was. With the pleasant company of the jolly "King of Battle Harbour," as skipper, we sailed some six miles to Indian Cove, Cape Charles, and were given hospitable welcome at the house of one of the numerous Pyes who populate this region, — and a sturdy and well-favoured race they are.

The view from the front porch of the house is characteristic and well worth noting. A short gunshot away is the small harbour, leading in from a narrow tickle between a high rocky

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island and the mainland. Back from the harbour the rocky hills rise precipitously to the height of several hundred feet. On the sides of these rocks and in the narrow shelf along the shore the houses of some sixteen families are crowded in wherever they can find a foothold, while the shore itself is covered with platforms built on poles over the water. These support fish-houses and fish-flakes. The fish-houses are of all kinds, from the white painted one with a hip-roof, to the low shacks or huts, whose roofs are covered with green and flowering sods. Fishing-boats in numbers are anchored in the cove, while others, picturesque veterans in various stages of dilapidation, are pulled up on the shore. Immediately in front of the house, between it and the fish-houses, is an extensive fish-flake, covered with fir boughs, and spread in places with fish, in places with neat piles of this standard article.

Perhaps the most conspicuous object in the landscape is a large frame erected on poles. This frame has various compartments, in three of which are stretched sealskins, as if in em-



Indian Cove, Cape Charles



Indian Cove, Cape Charles





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broidery stretchers. Another frame with two more sealskins is near at hand. The usual wood-piles, arranged wigwam-shape, and made of spruce and fir poles fifteen or twenty feet long, are now so familiar that I hardly notice them. All along the edges of the stages, tall poles are erected with wooden blocks at the tops, by which fish-nets are hoisted to dry. Great black kettles for trying out seal and fish oil are dotted about.

A little way up the hill on the left is another characteristic Labrador feature. A bit of ground, perhaps fifteen by twenty feet in area, is protected from the winds and from the all-devouring dogs by a strong and high fence. In this sacred enclosure the dark moist ground is deeply trenched for drainage, and some baby turnips and cabbages are making a brave attempt to grow. In one corner a few rhubarb plants are doing the same. The small leaves of the turnips and cabbages are boiled and eaten, as the plants rarely reach maturity. I promise to send my friends in this cove some seeds of kohl-rabbi and Swiss chard, believing

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that these plants will successfully combat the conditions existing there.

On the right of the house, a mountain stream comes babbling down over the rocks, and falls in a little cascade, a spot resorted to by the villagers with pails and jugs, — pitchers do not thrive in this English atmosphere. The familiar door-yard bird in this interesting environment is the noble white-crowned sparrow, and he is catching insects by the steps and singing from the wood-pile as I write. I am thankful for many blessings as I sit here, and not the least that there are no English house-sparrows in all Labrador.

I have doubtless omitted many interesting features, but it would take long study to grasp all the details in this confusing picture. One very movable and ever interesting point must, however, be mentioned, and that is the dogs. In this particular region the breed does not seem to be pure Eskimo. The dogs are of a slightly smaller race, and their bushy tails are usually held out behind like a fox's brush instead of curling over the back. Besides the

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howl, they also occasionally bark. Very fierce and wolfish they look when their great shaggy mane is erected and they show their canine fangs.

In winter this populous cove is deserted. In October, before the ice blocks the waterways, the families move in their great fishing-boats, and sail up to the more protected regions of the Lodge, a deep bay some nine or ten miles distant. Here they ascend the St. Charles River into the woods, where they occupy their winter houses, and are more protected from the wintry blasts than when on the coast. The great business of the winter is hunting and trapping for furs. They also cut the spruce and larch and balsam fir, which in this warm and protected region grow to the height of fifteen or twenty feet. These poles are rafted down to Indian Cove when the ice breaks up in the spring

In March, while the country is still locked in winter's icy embrace, the return journey is made by dog sledges. Over lake and forest they speed in a nearly straight line to their

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summer home, so as to be ready for the seal hunt. The seal are shot or clubbed on the ice, and later, when the ice leaves, are taken in nets. The skins are used for clothing and boots, the fat is tried out for oil, and the flesh dried for dog food. Then come the salmon and later the cod, the chief harvest of the coast. Both spring and fall they shoot many ducks and other water-fowl. And so the time goes. The life is indeed an interesting and varied one.

The people are a sturdy and contented-looking race. It is true that they lack many things that we call necessities, and are entirely ignorant of most of our luxuries, but to my mind they are infinitely better off than the toiling slum dwellers of our great cities, yea, even than many a possessor of a palace there, who spends his unhealthy life in a feverish scramble for money and amusement.

While birds as always were my chief study and delight here, I had one sentimental object in view in visiting Cape Charles, and that was to find where Captain George Cartwright, gentleman trapper and adventurer, lived at



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the time when the American colonists were fighting for their freedom from England.

July 30, 1906, is a clear, warm day, with a southwesterly wind and the glass at 70° when we start on our sentimental journey at half-past six in the morning. It is a hot day in these parts, and we are devoured by flies, big and little. Our path leads over a high hill and down into the valley by the whale factory, whose savoury precincts we avoid by passing to windward. Again we climb a high hill, and in the arctic regions of its summit, pipits flit about and horned larks anxiously call their young.

As we plunge down into the Hudsonian zone, into a valley where the larches, firs, and spruces bravely raise their heads to a height of five or six feet, our ears are greeted with the familiar song of the robin. Fox-sparrows are singing their wonderfully clear and flute-like song. I am impressed with the perfection of this song and its wild beauty, but I miss a certain indefinable charm or spiritual quality which appeals to me in the song of some other



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birds that are inferior performers. For example, while I stand listening, I am enthralled by the plaintive melody of the white-throated sparrow, who under the protection of the woods has crept thus far north. White-crowned sparrows are also singing, and the retiring Lincoln's sparrow is good enough to sing twice for our benefit his bubbling purple-finch song. Occasionally a tree-sparrow chants his simple ditty. A Wilson's warbler greets us at close range, and eyes us inquisitively. He is singing meanwhile, and turns his head from side to side, showing his glossy black cap. How different his actions from those of the elusive and secretive Tennessee warbler.

Our passage through these rugged woods is slow and painful. The stiff and crooked branches of the trees interlock for self-protection. One great advantage in many of these regions is that when one is uncertain about the way, by standing on tiptoes one can generally overlook the forest.

Over more mountainous hills and through deep vales we toil, at last reaching the head of

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White Bear Bay. Here a small stream flows down from the little tarn above. With the aid of a silver doctor fly, I soon land a dozen trout, dark red and spotted as only mountain trout can be. The brook teems with them, and several throw themselves out of the water at once when the fly is cast. However, this is not a fishing expedition, and more trout we cannot eat, so the rod is put up reluctantly, and we continue on our way, as it is already high noon.

Forming the northern side of White Bear Bay is a rocky promontory with a narrow neck, and here we find the site of one of Cartwright's first abiding-places on these shores. A level bit of ground it is, with White Bear Bay but a stone's throw to the south, and the entrance to the Lodge, a deep bay, equally distant on the north. Here is the evidence of an ancient house site. There is a small depression in the ground, a number of large stones, some of them flat, bits of what might have been mortar, and some portions of rough bricks, some red, some yellow, some parti-coloured.

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The clay of the red bricks is rough, with small contained pebbles. All are more or less covered with moss and lichen. A circle of grass, fireweed, and yarrow grows about. Can this yarrow, an English plant, be the descendant of some yarrow brought over by Cartwright 130 years ago? The thought is pleasing. It is the only yarrow I have seen anywhere at Cape Charles. On either side of this depression, and extending back some thirty paces, two low parallel mounds of earth overgrown with curlew berry and reindeer moss can be dimly traced. These low earthworks, not over a foot high, are nine paces apart, and a flat gravel floor, moss-covered, separates them. The end of one of them turns squarely at right angles, and extends three yards in front of the depression where the bricks are found.

Behind rises gently a bare hill, on which, no doubt, Cartwright shot many a fat curlew. Close at hand is a cool spring in the deep sphagnum moss, and a few stunted firs and larches struggle painfully to raise their heads a couple of feet. Ancient gnarled trees they



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are, some of them doubtless first starting on their life's struggle in Cartwright's time. There are good anchoring places for boats on either side of the promontory, and several inviting coves. It is an ideal spot, one that a man of Cartwright's breeding might well have enjoyed to the full.

This description I wrote on the spot. On my return to Boston, I re-read Cartwright's Journal and found that, although he first built at the mouth of the St. Charles River at the head of the Lodge, he afterwards removed to a point near White Bear Bay, evidently the place I have just described. On June 26, 1774, he writes, "our new dwelling-house" was begun, and he speaks of the work on the wharf and houses. On July 14th, the following entry occurs: "All the shoremen were employed on the dwelling-house, and the bricklayer began the kitchen chimney." The most interesting record in this connection is under date of August 27, 1774: "Our new house being now habitable, we took possession of it to-day. It is seventy feet by twenty-five, and contains

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a kitchen twenty-four feet square, a dining-room twenty-four by sixteen, six bedrooms and a small passage, being only a ground floor; which I preferred for fear of fire." In another place he says the bricks and lime were brought by him from England.

The measurements of the house, as given by Cartwright, and of the low mounds that I had paced correspond so closely that it is evident that these latter originally formed the base or foundation of the house.

It is a very hot day for the Labrador. The glass stands at 80° in the shade. A plunge and short swim in the icy waters of White Bear Bay is a fitting prelude to a dinner of erbswurst soup, two pans full of trout, whose tender flesh melts in the mouth, a half-loaf of bread, and a bit of chocolate, all washed down with copious draughts from Cartwright's spring. The sentimental and material memories of this day will long abide with me.

The Journal I refer to was written by George Cartwright, Esq., and published in Newark, England, in 1792. It is in three weighty quarto



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volumes entitled "A Journal of Transactions and Events during a Residence of nearly sixteen years on the Coast of Labrador, containing many interesting particulars both of the Country and its Inhabitants not hitherto known. Illustrated with proper Charts." Cartwright's was an interesting career. Born in England, in 1739, he served under Clive in India, reaching the rank of captain. On May 25, 1770, in the *Nimrod*, a schooner of fifty tons, Cartwright set out from Bristol, England, for Labrador, which he reached on July 27th.

In the preface of the Journal he says: "Conscious of my inability to entertain the reader with the Style and Language of some late writers, I humbly solicit his candour and indulgence. . . . However great some of its [the Journal's] defects may appear, I hope they will in some measure be compensated for by the veracity of my narrative." One is impressed with the truth of the latter statement. The Journal, which is a matter-of-fact record of the writer's daily life and his checkered experiences as trapper, hunter, and fisherman, contains

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many acute observations in natural history. In this early period caribou came in great numbers every winter to the shore and its islands. The polar bear was a common animal, and bred even in southern Labrador, while the black bear resorted in large numbers to the streams in the spring when they were crowded with salmon. Beavers and their dams were common, and the habits of this animal are described at some length by Cartwright. The bird life is vividly portrayed in the accounts of the flights of curlew in the fall, the great numbers of ducks and geese, murres and gulls, crowding the islands and furnishing the polar bears and Cartwright's Company with many feasts of eggs.

Cartwright first settled at Cape Charles, as we have already seen. Later he established another post at Sandwich Bay, the present site of the Hudson Bay Post of Cartwright.

In shooting, egging, salmon fishing, and cruising along the coast in summer, visiting his traps and exploring the hills on "rackets" or snow-shoes for game in winter, contending

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against snow-storms and intense cold, Cartwright led an interesting life, and one that he seems to have enjoyed to the full. The long severe winters had no terrors for him, and he enthusiastically extols the climate and compares it favourably with that of England. Being a man of tact and good sense, he was on the most friendly terms with the Eskimos, who were then numerous in southern Labrador, and he gives a most interesting description of their manners and customs. Several of the Eskimos he took across the water for a visit to London, where they were royally entertained, but most unfortunately all except one died of the small-pox.

He records with Pepys's faithfulness his labour and domestic problems as well as his medical work among his servants and the Eskimos. His servants are frequently given a taste of the rope's end to keep them in order, a punishment they doubtless deserved, judging from records such as the following, which are common: "December 24, 1774, at night all hands were drunk and fighting, according to

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annual custom." They mutiny when refused salt pork, although given all the venison they can eat. He is obliged to act the part of judge and jury, and divorce his wife in the midst of a long winter, for manifestly unbecoming conduct. He prides himself on his bloodletting, purges, blisters, and handiness in midwifery.

On August 27, 1778, in Sandwich Bay, he is visited by the privateer *Minerva* from Boston, commanded by Capt. John Grimes, and despoiled of one of his vessels and much hard won peltry; while he feasts the officers on venison and curlew. He writes: "I cannot be less than fourteen thousand pounds worse for this visit," and he adds: "May the devil go with them." He philosophically ends his journal for the day thus: "And I had the pleasure to find that they had forgot a puncheon of olive-oil, and my three live swine. As soon as they were gone, I took up my gun, walked out upon the island, and shot a curlew. A very fine day."

Some time after this, he is visited by a British war-vessel and laments that he has only salt



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pork with which to entertain the company. He makes several voyages to and from England, and returns for the last time to his native country in October, 1786, in a packet from New Brunswick, having as his cabin companion Benedict Arnold.

Southey's description of Cartwright is most interesting. He says: "I saw Major Cartwright (the sportsman, not the patriot) in 1791. I was visiting with the Lambs, at Hampstead, in Kent, at the house of Hodges, his brother-in-law; we had nearly finished dinner when he came in. He desired the servant to cut him a plate of beef from the sideboard. I thought the footman meant to insult him: the plate was piled to a height which no ploughboy after a hard day's fasting could have levelled; but the moment he took up his knife and fork, and arranged the plate, I saw this was no common man. A second and third supply soon vanished. Mr. and Mrs. Lamb, who had never before seen him, glanced at each other; but Tom and I, with schoolboys' privilege, kept our eyes riveted upon him with what



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Doctor Butt would have called the gaze of admiration. 'I see you have been looking at me' (said he, when he had done). 'I have a very great appetite. I once fell in with a stranger in the shooting season and we dined together at an inn. There was a leg of mutton which he did not touch. I never make more than two cuts off a leg of mutton; the first takes all one side, the second all the other; and when I had done this, I laid the bone across my knife for the marrow.' The stranger could refrain no longer. 'By God, sir,' said he, 'I never saw a man eat like you.'

"This man had strength and perseverance charactered in every muscle. He eat three cucumbers, with a due quantity of bread and cheese, for his breakfast the following morning. I was much pleased with him, he was good-humoured and communicative; his long residence on the Labrador coast made his conversation as instructive as interesting. I had never before seen so extraordinary a man, and it is not therefore strange that my recollection of his manner, and words, and countenance

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should be so strong after an interval of six years.

"I read his book in 1793, and, strange as it may seem, actually read through the three quartos. At that time I was a verbatim reader of indefatigable patience, but the odd simplicity of the book amused me — the importance he attached to his traps delighted me, it was so unlike a book written for the world — the solace of a solitary evening in Labrador. I fancied him blockaded by the snows, rising from a meal upon the old, tough, high-flavoured, hard-sinewed wolf, and sitting down like Robinson Crusoe to his journal.

"The annals of his campaigns among the foxes and beavers interested me more than ever did the exploits of Marlborough or Frederic; besides, I saw plain truth and the heart in Cartwright's book and in what history could I look for this?

"The print is an excellent likeness. Let me add that whoever would know the real history of the beaver must look for it in this work. The common accounts are fables.

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“Coleridge took up a volume one day, and was delighted with its strange simplicity.”

Cartwright died at Mansfield in Nottinghamshire on February 19, 1819, at the ripe age of eighty years. His was indeed a picturesque character.

## CHAPTER X

### ANOTHER DAY AT CAPE CHARLES

"Roving the trackless realms of Lyonnese  
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn."  
— *Tennyson*.

"There sometimes doth a leaping fish  
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer.  
The crags repeat the raven's croak,  
In symphony austere."  
— *Wordsworth*.

THE good people of Indian Cove are dressed in their best clothes, the men in black coats, some of them even in "bowlers," the women with bright bits of finery. It is Sunday, and a young lay reader has come to the Cove the night before, and is to read service at the little chapel.

As for ourselves, we act in the eyes of the villagers, no doubt, the parts of unregenerate heathen. Our Labrador days are all too short, the outside world too enchanting. We must needs worship at the great shrine of Nature,

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and worship we do through ten glorious hours that day.

Although I have no intention, like the Englishman on "fine days," of killing anything, yet I feel that I ought to take my gun, in case some unusual or unknown bird should cross our path. Rather than conceal the parts of my gun in my old shooting-jacket, I make a clean breast of my intentions to my good host, but disclaim any wish to hurt his feelings. He is a liberal man and says it is for me to decide. As for himself, only twice has he fired a gun on Sunday. Once he had shot a fierce dog, an act of necessity. On the other occasion he admits he was tempted by the devil and fell. While in a boat with some companions, he found himself on a sudden surrounded by six otters. The men could not resist the temptation and the otters were slain. He adds meditatively that, although the men of the Cove consider it very wicked to fire a gun on Sunday, they have no hesitation about chasing a wounded bird or beast about for hours, with sticks and stones, with the hope of capturing it.



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I decide to take my gun, and it may be added that I have no occasion to use it, a fact which gives great pleasure to my hostess, who tells me I shall — in consequence of my enforced piety, no doubt — have good luck on the morrow. Such are the inconsistencies of human nature.

A little way back from the Cove, the Sentinel, a hill of naked rock, like all these arctic hills, rises up to the height of 654 feet. Hitherwards we first turn our steps, and, stretched on a bed of reindeer lichen, we drink in the glorious air and view. Beneath us lies the little cove we have just left, with its cluster of houses and fishing-stages, the waters of its harbour dotted with fishing-vessels resting from their labours on the Sabbath. Beyond the Cove are the narrow tickles and the small rocky islands, and beyond these across the water lies Great Caribou Island with its raven cliff. On the farther side of this island is Battle Harbour. On the other side is the unknown country we are longing to explore, a confused mass of mountainous rocky hill, rising one behind the other,

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deep inlets from the sea and scattered lakes. It is a land of desolation, but its very desolation and wildness have a charm which it is difficult to express or explain. The crisp reindeer lichen on which we lie seems good enough to eat, in fact its taste and consistency are not unlike that of "shredded wheat," but unlike the reindeer, we can extract, I fear, no nourishment from it.

On the western side of the Sentinel in a small valley, where willows, alders, firs, and spruces grow about shoulder high, we had heard the day before the song of the Tennessee warbler, and thither we direct our steps. At Lark Harbour in Newfoundland, at Mary Harbour and Rigolet in Labrador, we had already heard this elusive bird, but our utmost efforts had resulted in but momentary glimpses of a small neat bird, almost white below and darker above. These glimpses, together with the song, were sufficient for identification. I know it is not customary in this day of Audubon Societies to speak of such a dreadful thing as the shooting of a bird, in a book of the nature-

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loving class, but I believe above all things in frankness, and I will confess here that I wished for scientific purposes to obtain a specimen of this warbler, so that there might not be the slightest suspicion of error. I will also confess that I made a complete failure of it, that I did not get so far even as to fire at this elusive bird anywhere. Having confessed this, I will say that I am a member of the Audubon Society, and that I desire above all things to protect birds. In many of the nature books that I have read, an astute reader can hear the report of the gun between the lines, but the writer is more discreet than I, and says nothing about it. I might also say, in passing, that the great Audubon probably killed more birds than almost any man now living. But he was a true bird-lover, and in slaying he immortalized these birds.

We reached the haunts of the Tennessee warbler, and, stretching ourselves on the hillside, prepared to wait for his song and for a hoped-for sight of the performer. To the west lies what appears to be a lake surrounded by small



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mountains with rounded peaks, irregularly tumbled about and naked of vegetation, except in the sheltered gullies where the dwarfed trees desperately cling to life. The "lake" is about a mile in diameter and contains a rocky island. On more careful scrutiny I notice a white line of surf along the shore. This and the subdued roar that comes to my ears shows me that the "lake" throbs with the pulse of old ocean, and that it is one of the numerous off-shoots from the sea, and not a mountain lake as I had supposed. I also discover that even where there is no surf in these secluded harbours, the pink line of rock bare of lichens along the shore distinguishes the salt-water harbour from the true lake where the lichen-covered rocks and green sphagnum moss extend to the water-line. Beyond rises an amphitheatre of hills whose heights it is difficult to estimate. If the spruces and firs, which fill the valleys, are of the size common along the Maine coast, it is easy to picture the hills as rugged mountains of three thousand feet. But I know these same forests are of dwarfed

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and pitiful size, and the mountains dwindle therefore to hills of a thousand feet.

Nearer at hand are groups of dwarf balsam firs huddling close together for protection from the arctic blasts, showing by their blighted tops that their ambitious hopes had been nipped. Again there are groups of black spruces, alders, and willows all about shoulder high, interspersed with meadows of grasses, rushes, and horsetails, through which meanders a little brook. The air is sweet with the breath of the firs and the twinflower, — the lovely *Linnæa borealis*, — here a deeper pink than I had ever seen it. Labrador tea, *Clintonia*, and dwarf cornel are still in flower, and the bake-apple berries are beginning to take on a rosy blush.

Over the salt-water lake a great black-backed gull is sailing in graceful circles, and the distant croak of a raven is borne to our ears from a rugged cliff along the shore. Nearer at hand an Alice's thrush is calling in its vigorous night-hawk style. Fox-sparrows are carolling forth their wild music and smacking like brown thrashers as they scratch among



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the leaves. The song of a lonely white-throat comes up pure and serene from a thicket. A black-poll warbler lazily drones his simple lay, *tsit, tsit, tsit*, the notes growing rapidly louder and then suddenly and unexpectedly becoming faint and indistinguishable. The bird is too lazy to change the key. The notes are all alike. Occasionally he utters his alarm-note, a sharp *chip*, but the call-note, *tsit*, such a common note during the migrations, is seldom heard.

A Lincoln's sparrow is chipping in the bushes, and makes so bold as to show himself for an instant. His is a retiring nature. He rarely forgets himself even in the ecstasy of song, for even at this time he is concealed in an alder bush or in the depths of a spruce or fir. Careful and persistent stalking will alone reward the bird watcher, yet the bird will stop singing and skulk like a mouse in the bushes if he but suspect that he is an object of attention. The young birds are less cautious. It is on this account, I believe, that more Lincoln sparrows are seen in Massachusetts during the autumn

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migration than in the spring. In the spring the youngsters that survive are as cautious as their elders, and skulk in hedgerows and bushes as if their lives depended on it.

At first sight the Lincoln's sparrow looks like a song-sparrow, but when one is accustomed to the former bird, its more slender and slightly smaller form and the olive instead of buffy tints of the back make it easily recognized. In addition to this, the smaller spots and the olive wash across the breast are characteristic on front view.

The call-note of the Lincoln's sparrow is a sharp chip, closely resembling the chip of his cousin, the song-sparrow. He also has a way of smacking, but his smack is not as rich and forceful as that of the fox-sparrow. His song — or at least the song we heard, for he indulges in a variety — begins like the song of a purple finch, although quicker, and ends with a fainter trill suggestive of a house-wren. It is a wild and interesting song, and well fits his secretive character.

In marked contrast to the Lincoln's sparrow

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the energetic and restless redpolls are constantly flitting about, singing their excuse for a song on the wing or in plain sight on the tip-top of a spruce. Verily bird nature varies as widely as human nature.

The chief object of our search, for which we lie down silently for an hour and examine the thickets for another hour, gives but a meagre exposition of himself this morning. The Tennessee warbler sings two or three times from the interior of a willow thicket, and then begins a series of sharp small chippings which soon cease, however, when we attempt to see its author, and we are left helpless without any clue to his whereabouts, nor will he deign to sing or chip again. However, we are content, for we have added the *chip* to our stock of knowledge of this bird. Before, although he had sung and we had caught passing glimpses of him, he had not chipped. His song as I wrote it down when fully given seems to be divisible, like Cæsar's Gaul, into three parts, and goes like this: *chee-chee-chee — twt-twt-twt — see-see-see*. This is a very imperfect representation

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of it, but I found it helped me to memorize the song. Whether it will help any one else, I am doubtful. Part of the song reminds one of the song of the Nashville warbler.

Reluctantly we give up our search and press on westward for pastures new. At the foot of the valley is a small pond enclosed in a miniature forest, through which our progress is slow but interesting. Above this pond a stream drops some thirty feet over the rocks and we climb to another level where there is another pond. Above this is a series of ponds, some with sandy shores, others overlapped with fringes of sphagnum. The secret of all these ponds or tarns at various levels lies in their hard rock bottoms, which securely hold the waters and prevent their emptying themselves by the cutting down of their outlets. Trout leap from time to time in the tarns, and there are doubtless plenty of them there.

At last we strike a well-defined trail about the width of a komatik cut through the dwarf forest. In a deep gully the trees are taller, but those near the trail are cut about six feet from



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the ground, suggestive of deep snows and winter's cold. A bit of bone runner belonging to a komatik as well as numerous dog signs confirm our suspicions as to the use of this trail. That the trail is used in winter only is brought forcibly to our attention by the fact that it ends abruptly at the shores of a pond, while at the other side we can make out its continuance. Crossing the pond in winter must take but a minute or two. In summer it is another matter. The woods are almost impenetrable, and they are too tall here to trample on or even to look over. The shore of the pond seems preferable, and by careful work, swinging around on the bushes and trees, jumping from rock to rock, and occasionally wading, we manage to reach the opposite side.

After this exertion a bath would be attractive, but the flies make it impossible, so we turn to at once with a will and cook and eat our dinner.

It may be well here to diverge a little on the subject of flies, for Labrador flies are famous. Perhaps because we had heard so much about



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them, we have been agreeably disappointed, or perhaps during our brief visits back from the immediate coast we have been particularly fortunate. However, they were bad enough, but not nearly as bad as the natives seemed to think. It is true that when I first went into the woods, the black flies had caused my face to swell so that I began to think of mumps, but I soon became inoculated and developed an antitoxin so that black fly bites ceased to swell to such an extent. My companion, who was collecting flies for an entomological friend, once remarked that two kinds of mosquitoes, a midge, the black fly, and four kinds of horse and moose flies were attacking us. The largest of the latter species is three-quarters of an inch long and takes great bites without so much as by your leave. Our friends at Indian Cove called the large ones "wops"; whether they meant by this wasps or whoppers, I do not know, but both terms are equally appropriate.

We discarded tar in favour of equal parts of oil of citronella and olive-oil. It is true that

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this smells like cheap perfumery, and an Eskimo girl at one house where we stayed evidently enjoyed using some of our mixture as a hair-oil, yet we grew quite fond of the odour, and were delighted to see that a fresh application had an opposite effect on the flies. I also fondly hoped to be able to recommend it as a cure for loss of hair. I am, however, still in considerable doubt on this latter point.

The "amateur geologist" we met on the *Home* told a very good story of opening some small cans of devilled ham for men who had helped him on a portage in Newfoundland. As he was opening some more tins, he noticed that one of the men was rubbing the contents on his face. "I thought it was to keep off the flies, sorrh!" he said.

Mosquito netting helmets that fold up for the pocket we carried for dread emergencies, but used them only once or twice. They are excellent when one is occupied with a trout on a fly rod, but somewhat disturbing in the use of binoculars. However, one can sleep in them with great comfort.

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All things good and bad come to an end, and we returned much refreshed in body and soul by our service this day in the great church of Nature. I think our good hostess had shaken her head many times at our heathenish way of spending the Sabbath, but she gave us with true Christian charity a good supper of fishermen's brews or brewis. This, let me hasten to explain, is a favourite dish in Labrador, and consists of boiled fish and boiled hard bread with squares of fried pork floating in their own fat poured over it. It is, in fact, a scientific combination of fish, fat and farinaceous, and is as delicious as it is nourishing. As a great treat we were given also some tender cabbage and turnip leaves boiled with a piece of fat pork. They tasted good, and this was the only occasion when we had green vegetables in Labrador. However, it was still early in the season, only the 29th of July.

Speaking of vegetables, it might be well to relate here that one day at Battle Harbour I had found the family with whom we were staying contemplating with awe a large Hub-



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bard squash, a present from the captain of a salt schooner. They had never seen one before, knew nothing of its anatomy, much less of its uses and taste. I discoursed with enthusiasm on the delights of squash as a vegetable, and especially of its virtues as a pie, and, having a fine scorn for cook-books, rashly offered to make a pie if the good woman would make the crust. To be sure there was no milk and no eggs, but I felt confident that with the liberal use of butter, flour, sugar, and spices I could turn out a presentable article, although I had never attempted one before. Perhaps I was as rash as the man who, when asked whether he could play the violin, replied that he did not know, but he would try. Unfortunately I never had a chance to distinguish myself, for I went to Cape Charles the next day, and on my return the squash had been given away. The family had tried squash as a vegetable and pronounced it nasty, so had presented the fruit to the nurses at Doctor Grenfell's Hospital. They welcomed it with open arms as a long lost friend.

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Our return to Battle Harbour is worth telling. It had been foggy all day, but the sun peered into the harbour about two in the afternoon, and we set sail in a fishing-boat managed by three good men and true. Out in the tickle we ran into a thick fog and passed by Tilsey Island. The skipper steered by compass for Black Rock, on the point of Great Caribou Island. The sea was running high, and the waves knocked the boat about so that steering by the dancing needle was difficult, yet soon after the men began to listen for the rote, we heard it and saw the white breakers. Then Black Rock suddenly appeared in the fog wall. Gunning Point was next picked up in the same way. Then we ran on in the dense fog with only a shearwater or two as companions, until I began to wonder whether after all we had missed the entrance to the harbour, and were sailing out into the bleak Atlantic. The fog lay low over the water, while above we had occasionally glimpses of the sun. "It is clear enough overhead," I incautiously remarked. "Yes, but we are not going that way yet, I



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hope," replied the skipper. This is a favourite joke along the coast. The skipper beguiled the time, meanwhile, by telling of his four shipwrecks, and I wondered whether he was not a Jonah.

Suddenly we found ourselves in the middle of a narrow tickle, between a rock and the main island, with surf on either hand. How the skipper managed to strike the middle of this narrow passage is more than I can understand, unless instinct, an instinct gained by long experience on these treacherous shores, guided him. I half-suspect, however, that it was merely good luck. We were soon in the familiar basin of Battle Harbour and left the fog outside.

## CHAPTER XI

### AUDUBON AND THE NEED OF AN AUDUBON SOCIETY IN LABRADOR

“When August comes, if on the Coast you be,  
Thousands of fine Curlews you’ll daily see.”

— *Cartwright’s Journal*.

“I had a fine view of the most extensive and the dreariest wilderness I have ever beheld. It chilled the heart to gaze on these barren lands of Labrador.” — *Audubon’s Journal*.

ONE of the greatest pleasures in life is anticipation. The traveller obtains all the information he can of the countries he plans to visit, — of its scenery, its history, its people. A naturalist not only does this, but he also learns as much as he can of the geology, the flora, and the fauna. The man who is particularly interested in birds, in addition makes himself familiar with all the ornithological lore of the country. In this way he enjoys in

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anticipation the pleasures to come, and when he reaches his goal he knows what to look for. A familiar bird at home may be previously unknown or extremely rare in the foreign land. Without this previous preparation one might pass by many interesting observations.

It was with this spirit, therefore, that I searched any and all books on Labrador that might by any chance say anything about birds. In this way I came to know the writings of Cartwright. My companion and fellow student made a card catalogue of the birds of Labrador, and to this we added from time to time such notes and observations of value as we discovered in our reading.

Every professional or business man should have his avocation as well as his vocation. Woe to him who assiduously pursues his profession or business alone for many years with the delusion that some day he will retire, and enjoy with his gains the leisure and pleasures of life. Such hopes without previous training in an avocation are generally vain, as many a man has found to his cost. He knows no

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occupation for his leisure, and is too old, alas, to learn. He can watch his own symptoms, but cannot watch birds or any of the numerous interests "in the heavens above or in the earth beneath or in the waters under the earth." As Stevenson well says:

"The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

But these deluded mortals are not. Nothing really interests them.

Labrador has an interesting past. The doggerel verse by Cartwright emphasizes the sad changes that have come over the country. As the passenger pigeon in Audubon's day flew in countless multitudes through the United States and is now all but extinct, so the Eskimo curlew in former days flocked in great numbers every autumn to the Labrador coast. ✓

Professor Packard, writing of this bird in 1860, says: "On the 10th of August, the curlews appeared in great numbers. On that day we saw a flock which may have been a mile long and nearly as broad; there must have



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been in that flock four or five thousand! The sum total of their notes sounded at times like the wind whistling through the ropes of a thousand-ton vessel; at others the sound seemed like the jingling of multitudes of sleigh-bells."

The same stories of their former abundance I learned from the fishermen all along the coast. The birds were delicious food. They fattened almost to bursting on the empetrum or curlew berry so abundant on the hills. The fishermen told me that they always kept their guns loaded at the fish-stages, and shot into the great flocks as they wheeled by, bringing down many a fat bird. About fifteen years ago they rapidly diminished in numbers, and now perhaps a dozen or two, perhaps none at all, are seen in a season. The tale is soon told. The places that knew them once in countless multitudes shall know them no more.

Curiously enough, the fishermen do not attribute the decrease of this splendid bird to the wholesale slaughter along the coast. They all are imbued with the idea that the



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curlew troubled the farmers' corn-fields in the States, and hence were poisoned. One good fellow, when I objected that curlews did not eat corn, backed up his theory by the statement that he had seen corn in their stomachs! This is interesting, when one considers that the bird in passing through Labrador in the autumn comes from still more arctic regions. It has been suggested that the sudden falling off in numbers of these curlews may have been because they were overwhelmed by a storm in their long ocean trip south, — some three thousand miles from Labrador to the Antilles. It is certain, however, that incessant persecution has had something to do with their diminution.

Another bird whose name is for ever connected with Labrador, namely, the Labrador or pied duck, is indeed a bird of the past. It has become extinct within the memory of man, the last of its race dying at the hand of man, the destroyer, in 1874 or 1878, — there is some doubt about this latter date. Curiously enough, notwithstanding the descriptive name of this

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duck, we have but few records for Labrador. Audubon, in 1833, saw none of them in Labrador, although he was shown what he believed to be their nests.

The great auk, one of whose headquarters was at Funk Island, on the near-by coast of Newfoundland, became extinct about 1853. It undoubtedly disported itself many a time and oft along the Labrador coast. Cartwright thus quaintly and circumstantially describes the capture of one of these birds: "We were about four leagues from Groais Island, at sunset [Monday, August 15, 1771], when we saw a snow [sailing vessel] standing in for Croque. During a calm in the afternoon, Shuglawina [an Eskimo] went off in his Kyack, in pursuit of a penguin;<sup>1</sup> he presently came within a proper distance of the bird, and stuck his dart into it; but, as the weapon did not enter a mortal part, the penguin swam and dived so well that he would have lost both the bird

<sup>1</sup> The great auk was formerly called a penguin, the name being probably used in this connection before it was applied to the entirely different family of birds that now bear this name and are confined to the southern seas.

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and the dart, had he not driven it near enough the vessel for me to shoot it."

The first ornithologist to visit Labrador was the illustrious Audubon. He departed on a long-contemplated trip to this region from Eastport, Maine, on June 6, 1833, on the schooner *Ripley* commanded by Captain Emery. His party, all young men under twenty-four years of age, consisted of his son, John Woodhouse Audubon, Dr. George Shattuck, and William Ingalls, of Boston; Thomas Lincoln, of Dennysville, Maine; and Joseph Coolidge. They sailed through the Strait of Canso, visited the Magdalene Islands, and passed Bird Rock, white as snow with gannets. The *Ripley* came to anchor in American Harbour, near the mouth of the Natasquan River, in Labrador, on June 17th. From this point they cruised easterly along the southern coast of Labrador, touching at Little Mecatine, Baie de Portage, and Bradore.

On their arrival, the breeding season of the birds was at its height; eider-ducks, gulls, razor-billed auks, puffins, guillemots, and cor-



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morants were nesting in great numbers on the islands. Later they witnessed the great flight of Eskimo curlew.

The weather was cold and wet, the seas tumultuous. Storm succeeded storm. Audubon's southern blood was chilled by the rough climate, and his spirits were depressed by the ruggedness and desolation of the scenery. From the top of a high rock near Little Mecatine he exclaims: "I had a fine view of the most extensive and the dreariest wilderness I have ever beheld. It chilled the heart to gaze on these barren lands of Labrador." He lacked the Anglo-Saxon delight in northern regions so conspicuous in Cartwright.

Yet these Labrador days were full of intense pleasure for Audubon. The new birds and flowers filled him with delight, and he laboured incessantly on his plates, rising at three and drawing often for seventeen hours almost continuously, in the crowded, wet, and usually very unsteady cabin. Here he was obliged to protect his work from the water that dropped from the rigging, as there was no window to

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the cabin, and the only light was admitted through the hatches. He was often wet to the skin, chilled by the cold, pestered by the innumerable flies and mosquitoes, frequently seasick and worn by long hours of work and short hours of sleep. He attributes his fatigue to none of these, but exclaims: "No! No! it is that I am no longer young."

Audubon's young friends explored the shore and islands for specimens for his pencil, while he allowed himself only short trips from his work, for observation and exercise. He discovered a new sparrow, which he named the Lincoln's sparrow, after his young companion, Tom Lincoln. His Journal states that "twenty-three drawings have been executed, or commenced and nearly completed." Seventy-three bird-skins were prepared, mostly by his son John.

After nearly two months on these inhospitable shores, he sailed from Labrador on August 11, 1833. He enters in his Journal: "Seldom in my life have I left a country with as little regret as I do this." Leaving the schooner



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at Pictou, he reached Eastport on August 31st, and rejoined his family in New York on September 7th.

Before the arrival of the white man, — nature's worst enemy, — the Indian, the Eskimo, the fox, and the polar bear helped themselves from the abundant feast of eggs and young prepared by the water-birds along the Labrador coast. Little or no harm was done. The multitude of birds could well spare these moderate contributions. There were a few less mouths to be filled, but this natural pruning had little effect on the birds as a whole. During the nineteenth century, however, the drain on these wonderful nurseries of bird-life was fearful, and now but a pittance of the mighty host remains.

Audubon, in 1833, was filled with horror and disgust at the destruction that was then going on. The following is from his Labrador Journal for June 21, 1833, written at American Harbour.

"We ascertained to-day that a party of men from Halifax took last spring nearly forty

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thousand eggs, which they sold at Halifax and other towns at twenty-five cents per dozen, making over eight hundred dollars; this was done in about two months. Last year, upwards of twenty sail were engaged in 'egging;' so some idea may be formed of the birds that are destroyed in this rascally way. The eggers destroy all the eggs that are sat upon, to force the birds to lay again, and by robbing them regularly, they lay till nature is exhausted, and few young are raised. In less than half a century these wonderful nurseries will be entirely destroyed, unless some kind government will interfere to stop the shameful destruction."

And again at an island near Cape Whittle, on June 28, 1833, Audubon found two eggers gathering the eggs of murre. "They had collected eight hundred dozen and expect to get two thousand dozen. The number of broken eggs created a fetid smell on this island, scarcely to be borne."

Among the "Episodes," published in his "Ornithological Biographies," Audubon wrote

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a highly dramatic one on this subject, entitled "The Eggers of Labrador," parts of which are here quoted.

He describes a shallop with a crew of eight men. "There rides the filthy thing! The afternoon is half over. Her crew have thrown their boat overboard, they enter and seat themselves, each with a rusty gun. One of them sculls the skiff towards an island for a century past the breeding-place of myriads of guillemots, which are now to be laid under contribution. At the approach of the vile thieves, clouds of birds arise from the rock and fill the air around, wheeling and screaming over their enemies. Yet thousands remain in an erect posture, each covering its single egg, the hope of both parents. The reports of several muskets loaded with heavy shot are now heard, while several dead and wounded birds fall heavily on the rock or into the water. Instantly all the setting birds rise and fly off affrighted to their companions above, and hover in dismay over the assassins, who walk forward exultingly, and with their shouts mingling oaths and



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execrations. Look at them. See how they crush the chick within its shell, how they trample on every egg in their way with their huge and clumsy boots. Onward they go, and when they leave the isle, not an egg that they can find is left entire. The dead birds they collect and carry to their boat. Now they have regained their filthy shallop; they strip the birds by a single jerk of their feathery apparel while the flesh is yet warm, and throw them on some coals, where in a short time they are broiled. The rum is produced when the guillemots are fit for eating, and after stuffing themselves with this oily fare, and enjoying the pleasure of beastly intoxication, over they tumble on the deck of their crazed craft, where they pass the short hours of night in turbid slumber. . . . The light breeze enables them to reach another harbour a few miles distant, one which, like the last, lies concealed from the ocean by some other rocky isle. Arrived there, they re-act the scene of yesterday, crushing every egg they can find. For a week each night is passed in drunkenness and brawls,

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until, having reached the last breeding-place on the coast, they return, touch at every isle in succession, shoot as many birds as they need, collect the fresh eggs, and lay in a cargo. . . .

“With a bark nearly half filled with fresh eggs, they proceed to the principal rock, that on which they first landed. But what is their surprise when they find others there helping themselves as industriously as they can! In boiling rage they charge their guns and ply their oars. Landing on the rock, they run up to the eggers, who, like themselves, are desperadoes. The first question is a discharge of musketry, the answer another. . . .

“The eggers of Labrador not only rob the birds in this cruel manner, but also the fishermen, whenever they can find an opportunity; and the quarrels they excite are numberless. . . . These people gather all the eider-down they can find; yet so inconsiderate are they that they kill every bird which comes in their way. The eggs of gulls, guillemots, and ducks are searched for with care; and the puffins and



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some other birds they massacre in vast numbers for the sake of their feathers. So constant and persevering are their depredations that the species, which, according to the accounts of the few settlers I saw in the country, were exceedingly abundant twenty years ago, have abandoned their ancient breeding-places, and removed much farther north in search of peaceful security. Scarcely, in fact, could I procure a young guillemot before the eggers left the coast, nor was it until late in July that I succeeded, after the birds had laid three or four eggs each, instead of one, and when, nature having been exhausted, and the season nearly spent, thousands of these birds left the country without having accomplished the purpose for which they had visited it. This war of extermination cannot last many years more. The eggers themselves will be the first to repent the entire disappearance of the myriads of birds that made the coast of Labrador their summer residence, and unless they follow the persecuted tribes to the northward, they must renounce their trade." •

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In Canadian Labrador the laws against eggging or shooting the nesting birds are now fairly enforced, I am told. My own brief observations on the small piece of Canadian Labrador I saw would seem to bear this out. On Newfoundland Labrador, which includes a coastal strip extending from Blanc Sablon on the southern coast easterly to Cape Charles, and then north along the eastern coast, there seems to be no let or hindrance to the destructive tendencies of mankind. As Kipling says:

"There's never a law of God or man runs  
North of Fifty-three."

It is perfectly natural that the fishermen should consider the eggs and young and even the breeding parents as a godsend to eke out their scanty larder. Knowing every rock as they do, along the entire coast, they can easily keep in touch with the birds and rob them of their treasures. At Winsor Harbour, I saw six young great black-backed gulls cooped in an ancient wreck, for the purpose of fattening for the pan. Unless some penalty can be imposed one cannot expect a fisherman to pass

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by a nest full of eider-duck's eggs, or even leave the fat mother unmolested if he can shoot her. Young or moulting ducks are easily caught and make very good eating, and are no doubt a delightful change from the usual course of fish. One of the Moravian brethren spoke to me with great gusto of the delights of an omelet made of eider's eggs. The Eskimo procure, he said, from two to three hundred eggs of all kinds for them every spring. When I asked if he had noticed any diminution in the numbers of birds, he replied that he had not. My companion remarked to me *sotto voce*: "He'll never miss the water 'til the well runs dry."

Eider-ducks still breed in great numbers on the islands off the northern part of the eastern coast of Labrador. On the southern parts of the coast, the fishermen have, by their incessant persecutions, greatly reduced their numbers. They are actually killing the goose that lays the golden egg. In Norway and Iceland, the eider, instead of being slain, is offered every protection and encouragement, for the sake



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of its eggs and for the down which the female plucks from its breast as a covering for the eggs. The people are not even allowed to fire off guns near its haunts, and, in some localities, nesting-places are contrived for its accommodation. As a consequence the bird becomes very tame, and the eggs and down, which are taken under intelligent oversight, are the source of considerable profit, without causing any diminution in the stock of birds. If the people of Labrador could be made to understand this a new industry would arise, and the American eider, instead of being a vanishing race, would again populate the numerous islands along the southern coasts of the peninsula.

The destruction wrought by the Eskimo dogs I have already mentioned, and it must be considerable. It will continue until the dogs are destroyed in favour of reindeer.

During the migrations both spring and fall the liveyers take large toll of the ducks and other water-birds. Even gulls are shot for their flesh as well as their feathers. The ivory gull, a northern bird that follows the ice, is

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curiously enough called the "ice partridge," and is sometimes obtained, I was told by the gunners, in the following manner. A quantity of seals' blood is poured on to the ice near the shore, and the birds are shot as they hover over it, while some actually kill themselves by pitching against the ice in their eagerness to procure the food. The name "ice partridge" was a puzzle, but we came to the conclusion, from the description given of the bird, that it must be the ivory gull. I was so fortunate as to obtain a skin of an ivory gull from an Eskimo, and I showed it to my friends, the gunners. They at once exclaimed it was "an ice partridge."

Single-barrel muzzle-loading guns are the common weapons used, and large charges of powder and shot are the custom. I was told that 125 ducks were picked up at one place last spring after a volley of five guns. Twenty-five more were picked up the next morning. The fishermen, with whom I talked, made no concealment of the fact that they took all the eggs and killed all the birds they could. They often took their



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guns with them when they visited their fish-traps.

What is to be the result of all this if nothing be done to stop the destruction? There can be only one result, and that is already shown in places. For example, near Battle Harbour, where fishermen are plenty, sea-birds in summer are very scarce. It is true that in the deep bays and inlets, which are deserted in summer by man, and given over to the flies and mosquitoes, a number of water-birds breed comparatively unmolested, but the majority of the water-birds will not resort there, but prefer the outer islands.

In the United States the National Audubon Society, with local branches nearly everywhere, is doing most excellent work in bird protection. It is sincerely to be hoped that the wonderful nursery for water-birds in Labrador will not be entirely depopulated, but that sufficient protection for the breeding birds will be given before this latter deplorable state of affairs comes to pass.

## CHAPTER XII

### DR. WILFRED T. GRENFELL AND HIS WORK

"A robust, hearty Saxon, strong, indefatigable, devoted, jolly; a doctor, a parson by times, something of a sportsman when occasion permitted, a master mariner, a magistrate, the director of certain commercial enterprises designed to 'help the folk help themselves' — the prophet and champion, indeed, of a people; and a man very much in love with life."

— "*Dr. Grenfell's Parish*," by Norman Duncan.

I SHOULD have been saved much mortification if I had been so fortunate as to meet Doctor Grenfell in Labrador. The first question I am asked is always put in the form of an assertion: "Of course you saw Doctor Grenfell." On my confessing that I did not, interest in the subject dwindles. However, I have had the pleasure of meeting Doctor Grenfell in Boston and of knowing him, have heard much of his work, and while I was in Labrador saw his hospitals, his assistants, and his patients,

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but was so unfortunate as to play Box and Cox with him at Battle Harbour. He was never there when I was there, but came and went several times in my absence. He had kindly written me, offering every assistance and hospitality in Labrador, but we never made connections.

It will be worth while to take up in turn some of Doctor Grenfell's characteristics as given by Norman Duncan, in the lines quoted at the head of this chapter.

Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, a graduate of Oxford and of the London Hospital, and a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, after working in the London slums, joined the staff of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and established the medical mission to the fishermen of the North Sea fleet. Largely through his work in the face of much opposition, the moral and physical condition of these fishermen was greatly changed for the better. In 1892 Doctor Grenfell set sail for Labrador to inaugurate a similar work there, and he has been at it ever since. His work is not finished,





Dr. Grenfell's Hospital at Battle Harbour



Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, the Magistrate, Taking Evidence  
Photograph by Dr. E. A. Crockett





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there is still much to be done, but he has accomplished much in these fourteen years.

Before he came, no doctor had ever spent a winter in Labrador, and the visits of the government doctor in summer were few and unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the nearest hospital was many miles off in St. Johns, Newfoundland, and inaccessible during the greater part of the year. Doctor Grenfell has established a hospital on the northern Newfoundland coast at St. Anthony, which is open throughout the year, another at Battle Harbour, on the Labrador coast, at the entrance of the Straits of Belle Isle, also open throughout the year, and one at Indian Harbour, at the mouth of Hamilton Inlet, for the summer season. A fourth hospital he is establishing this summer in Canadian Labrador at Harrington.

The hospital at Battle Harbour consists of two connecting frame houses surrounded by an uncovered piazza or platform. The buildings are two stories in height, neatly painted white, with a text from the Bible in large white letters on a green background running across the

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fronts: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." There are accommodations for the nurses, who are called "sisters," and for about twenty patients. There is a neat dispensary, where out-patients, coming from the visiting fishing-vessels and brought from the surrounding country, are attended to. There is also an excellent operating-room, where many a poor soul is relieved of some great handicap to existence, and restored to usefulness. The resident physician's house is a picturesque little cottage which was brought here in pieces and set up on slightly higher ground to the north of the hospital. Here we were hospitably received by Doctor Grenfell's assistant, Doctor Mumford, and his wife and sister on our first visit, and by Doctor Grieve and his wife on our return, for the former assistant had been relieved and had started for England during our absence. Two Bowdoin College students were spending the summer at the hospital assisting in Doctor Grenfell's work in every way they could, but especially in

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helping to run the two gasoline motor launches that the doctor was using. Unfortunately, the launch at Battle Harbour lacked certain essential parts to her machinery, for which they had been waiting all summer, but they were not idle. While we were there they were digging a drain for the hospital, and sitting up with a very sick patient at night.

One poor boy who had boarded the *Home* at a port in southern Labrador, pale and limping, I later found in bed at the hospital, happy and beaming. He was enjoying a child's picture-book. He had had a neglected bone abscess, which was operated on successfully at the hospital. He would have lost his leg and probably his life if he had not reached this good asylum. There was a child in the hospital suffering from rickets, and I was perplexed at thinking of the difficulties of the attempt properly to feed a case of rickets without any cow's milk. I can imagine no better bequest to the hospital than a good cow with sufficient money to build a dog-proof fence about her, and a little income with which to purchase hay

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for her feed. Better still would be the purchase of some reindeer that could be protected in the same way. These would furnish milk and also an object-lesson in the superiority of reindeer over dogs. The modification of reindeer milk to suit the needs of infants would be a new and interesting problem.

At Indian Harbour I visited the other hospital. Here, besides the hospital, which contained seven or eight patients, was a large chapel, which the doctor in charge told me was often crowded with men on Sundays when the harbour was full of fishing-vessels. This hospital is closed during the winter.

The steamship *Strathcona* might properly be called a hospital. She is certainly a hospital ship, for she is fitted for the accommodation of patients. On her Doctor Grenfell traverses many miles of the dangerous coast during the summer. He visits patients, treating or operating on them at their homes, or he takes them aboard the steamer for transportation to one of his land hospitals. Many were the tales I heard of his daring work in crowding both

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steam and sail in fog and storm, for the season is brief when navigation is possible at all, and so much is to be done. He spares not himself. In the winter, he and his assistants travel many hundreds of miles on dog sledges along the icy highway of the Labrador coast on their missions of mercy.

I remember Doctor Grenfell's telling in Boston of two old men brought several hundred miles on dog sledges to the hospital at Battle Harbour. One came from the southern, the other from the eastern coast. Arrived at the hospital about the same time, they found that they were brothers, and they had not seen each other for twenty years. And they could not see each other then, for they were both blind from cataracts. However, before they left the hospital their sight was restored, for he operated on both successfully.

A number of specialists from our Eastern cities have volunteered from time to time for a part of the summer season, and have accompanied Doctor Grenfell on his round of mercy on the *Strathcona*.



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One of the lessons Doctor Grenfell's patients learn in his hospitals is the advantage of fresh air, and it is to be hoped that they act as missionaries in spreading this doctrine on their return to their homes. In two places I saw tuberculous-looking patients sitting up in make-shift tents out-of-doors where they could get the air and be protected from the winds. It is curious that in Labrador, where the air is so pure, this lesson should be needed, but it seems to be the impulse of all uneducated mankind whenever sickness occurs to stop every crack that can possibly let in a breath of fresh air. The consequence is tuberculosis is a prevalent disease in Labrador.

With the medical work Doctor Grenfell is, as Norman Duncan says, "a parson by times." He is a devoted follower of the great evangelist, the late Dwight L. Moody, and this religious side of his nature is constantly uppermost. "Preach the word," as well as "Heal the sick," is his motto.

That he is "a sportsman when occasion permitted" I doubt not, but I also doubt

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whether occasion often permits, although being a resourceful man he finds many more occasions than would the plodder.

A master mariner he certainly is, and he has long astonished the natives of these coasts by his adventurous voyages in fog and storm, — storms that have wrecked many a stauncher vessel. All I can say is that, being a family man, I am content to sail with a more cautious even if less skilful skipper, for Labrador rocks and Labrador icebergs have a way of cropping up in a fog when least expected. Many a vessel has Doctor Grenfell rescued from these rocks by his timely aid.

Doctor Grenfell is also a magistrate appointed by the Newfoundland government. He tries cases from time to time, and has done much to break up the crime of barratry. This latter word, being interpreted, means the wrecking of a vessel for the purpose of obtaining her insurance money. It is a crime that is doubtless far from infrequent on these shores.

Lastly, Doctor Grenfell is "the director of certain commercial enterprises designed to 'help

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the folk help themselves ' — the prophet and champion indeed of a people." Before he came to the coast, and even now, to a large extent, the fishermen, those who come for the summer only and those also who spend the winter in trapping, — the liveyers, — have been and are for the most part in a constant state of debt. The Hudson's Bay Company, which takes the furs, and the merchants, who take the fish, give in exchange at an enormous profit to themselves provisions, clothing, traps, nets, and salt. Both of these keep the people ground down by a debt they are never able to lift. As Doctor Grenfell says in "The Harvest of the Sea:" "The troubles of this system are very real. The merchant has to run a great risk. He lets out, in the form of goods, large sums of money, which he has to borrow from the bank. If the fishing is bad, he may never be paid at all, because the planters (the men who take out the supplies) cannot meet their debts. Again, if they can just pay, still the merchant is expected to make another advance for the winter. . . . The whole 'truck system,' as it



